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This extensive revision of a 1948 report notes the gradual assimilation of Mexicans into Minnesota's population. There are chapters on the employment of Texas Mexicans and Mexican nationals in agriculture and urban industries, on housing and family life, and health, delinquency, and welfare dependency. One chapter is devoted to education, another to the legal status of Mexicans in the United States, and a final section to the future prospects for assimilation in Minnesota. (NH)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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# THE MEXICAN IN MINNESOTA

REVISED

A REPORT

TO

GOVERNOR C. ELMER ANDERSON
OF
MINNESOTA

BY

THE GOVERNOR'S INTERRACIAL
COMMISSION

1953

UD 008 778

*This is the eighth of a series of reports to the Governor on various racial and religious situations which may affect the public welfare in Minnesota.*

Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch

# THE GOVERNOR'S INTERRACIAL COMMISSION

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# A Foreword

*by*

*Governor C. Elmer Anderson*
*of Minnesota*

It has been almost five years since the Governor's Interracial Commission published its first edition of "The Mexican in Minnesota."

At that time, the Commission concluded that there was a slow, but nevertheless steady integration of the Mexican people into Minnesota life.

Evidence now available very clearly bears out the accuracy of that conclusion. During the past five years, the Mexican people have made considerable progress in overcoming the obstacles which might have prevented their integration into Minnesota life.

The Mexican people have found more widely varied job opportunities than was once the case, and also they have taken greater advantage of educational opportunities.

It might have been expected that this broadening of contact between the Mexican people and the native Minnesota population would have resulted in greater discrimination against the Mexican. This, however, has not been the case, as there has been no appreciable increase in discrimination against the Mexican people.

This report tells a story of a gradual assimilation of the Mexican people into Minnesota's population. There is much yet to be accomplished, but there is room for great hope that the Mexican people will become good and true neighbors in the Minnesota community.

This report, setting forth as it does a program designed to accomplish this goal, and showing how this program has been at work, can serve as a pattern for better living between the Mexican people and the people of Minnesota.

A proper and good life for the Mexican people living in Minnesota will be of great benefit to Minnesota, and will also serve as a means to a better understanding between our people and all the people of Latin America.

# Letter of Transmittal

March 21, 1953

The Honorable C. Elmer Anderson
Governor of Minnesota
St. Paul, Minnesota

Dear Governor Anderson:

The Governor's Interracial Commission hereby submits to you an extensively revised edition of its report on the Mexican in Minnesota.

The original report was prepared five years ago. In the intervening years, there have been economic and social changes which have deeply affected both the Mexicans who reside here and the seasonal laborer who comes here in the summer. It seemed to the Commission then that a revised edition should be prepared which would contain new statistical data and the result of new studies.

In the work of revision there have been two objectives; one was to make the information as accurate as possible, the other to present the data in realistic proportions showing both the bright and dark lines. The work of collecting the data and directing the studies for the Commission was done by Mrs. Agnes Mueller, a trained research worker.

In these years when Communism dominates such large segments of the world it is imperative that the citizens of the United States develop a stronger friendship with the people of the nations south of the Rio Grande. And since all solid accomplishments start at home, the place for Minnesotans to begin is in their own state. The hope is entertained by the Commission that this booklet will help Minnesotans to understand and to appreciate more fully the Mexicans within the state. Such an understanding will be the beginning of a bridge of friendship with the peoples of the great nations south of the United States.

Respectfully yours,

Francis J. Gilligan
Chairman
The Governor's Interracial Commission

# THE MEXICAN IN MINNESOTA
## (Revised)

## Chapter I

### Who Is the Mexican?

The term Mexican as used in this report applies to any person of Indo-Hispanic ancestry, whether he is a native of Mexico or of the United States. In Minnesota, Mexicans may be classified in three groups. The first includes Mexicans who having lived in the state for several years, are now permanent residents and settled members of their respective communities. The second division comprises Mexicans born in Texas who follow seasonal employment which brings them to Minnesota annually for periods of temporary residence varying from 16 to 24 weeks. The third index is made up of Mexican nationals who have been brought to Minnesota through contract arrangements between their home government and the United States Departments of State and Agriculture, specifically for the performance of agricultural labor.

The 1950 federal census indicated that there were 950 persons of Mexican birth living in Minnesota. Most of them lived in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Slightly less than a third of the 950 were scattered throughout 26 counties other than Ramsey and Hennepin. At the present time, it is believed that there are about 4,800 permanent Mexican residents in Minnesota. An analyst in the research department of the Bureau of Employment and Security estimates that there are 3,800 Mexicans in St. Paul, 300 in Minneapolis and 400 in the rest of the metropolitan area made up of Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, and Anoka counties. The remainder of the Minnesota Mexican population is found in Blue Earth, Benton, Clay, Faribault, Freeborn, Kandiyohi, LeSueur, Martin, Morrison, Nicollet, Pennington, Pipestone, Polk, Sibley, Waseca, and St. Louis counties.

## Why Did He Come?

It is a truism of history that economic need motivates mass restlessness resulting in the migration of peoples from place to place. The primitive herdsman sought constantly to find new pasturage as his animals exhausted the old. The primitive fisherman searched for fresh stock to sell or barter. Modern man sometimes moves with the seasons to exchange laboring skills for money.

The majority of Mexicans who came to Minnesota arrived in search of better returns for their efforts than they could find at home. The participation of the United States in World War I brought an increased demand for labor. At the same time unsettled political conditions in Mexico caused the exodus of her people. Rapid expansion of the sugar beet industry in the United States brought the first extensive importation of Mexican workers into Minnesota.

The raising of sugar beets in Minnesota began in the early eighteen-nineties and in 1897 a beet-sugar factory was built at St. Louis Park. At that time and for several ensuing years the agricultural workers employed in the industry were largely of Russian and German descent.

### *World War I*

World War I cut off European immigration, drained domestic manpower into the armed forces and created the need for greatly increased industrial production. The resulting need for labor prompted congressional action to deal with the emergency.

The way was cleared for the systematic recruitment of Mexican workers for American fields by eliminating the head tax, the literacy test, and other measures formerly enacted to deter the entrance of Mexican labor into this country. This new pool of labor was used not only for agricultural work but also for aid in building barracks to house the new draft army.

The first Mexican workers to come to Minnesota were employed by the Minnesota Sugar Company operating a factory at Chaska. Mexican labor proved so satisfactory that it was in demand after the acute war emergency was past and recruitment of seasonal labor continued throughout 1929.

The Minnesota Sugar Company, now known as the American Crystal Sugar Company, ceased its Mexican recruitment campaign after a law passed by the Texas legislature required payment of a license fee for the hiring of labor outside the state. Since workers were recruited in all the larger cities of Texas including El Paso and Laredo, the license fee struck heavily at the source of help. Recruitment was undertaken again after the demand for agricultural labor developed during the years of World War II.

It is important to examine the conditions under which, in the twenties, the sugar company imported Mexican help. Transportation was provided, a bonus system adopted, and housing furnished for both summer and winter use. There was considerable criticism of the character of the living quarters as they were erected at the fields in some localities. In others, especially Albert Lea and Chaska, where the company maintained a housing project and what was known as The Mexican Hotel, the housing was good, even for winter use.

The company also assumed responsibility for the physical welfare of its employees, arranging medical care for the sick and issuing food orders for needy persons. Credit was established for families requiring it.

### *The Depression*

Good treatment brought many working Mexican families back to Minnesota each year. Gradually increasing numbers moved into the large cities, principally St. Paul, for the winter months. But the year 1933 brought sharp changes. The company no longer guaranteed wages, transportation, or credit and the welfare program was discontinued. Under the new regulations each worker must be hired individually and under individual contract and thus Mexicans had to compete in the open market. Language difficulty was a handicap. In some counties Mexicans were confronted by signs reading, "Only

White Labor Employed." By 1936 the labor contract showed a drop to eighteen dollars an acre with housing and sixty cents a ton for harvesting.

With the deepening of the depression, the troubles of Mexican migrants increased. In addition to the miseries of lowering wages and growing unemployment, they were haunted by fear of deportation to the state of their legal residence, or to Mexico. Many who had not yet gained settlement in Minnesota had lost out in their former places of residence, and in numerous instances they were found undergoing real hardship. They feared to ask for relief, believing that such a request might mean the first step toward deportation or removal to their place of legal settlement.

During the depression years much of St. Paul's permanent Mexican colony became established. The opportunities for work, although meager everywhere promised more in large centers of population than in the farming districts, where relief standards were appreciably lower.

In 1939 the movement of Mexicans from the country to urban areas had reached such momentum that official estimates place St. Paul's Mexican population for that year at slightly more than 4,000. The Minneapolis figure rates at 1,000. But in that period also there was a heavy migration from the Twin Cities. Some of the Mexicans left for Chicago to work in industrial plants; many others returned to work on farms in Texas and Kansas.

The outbreak of World War II changed the picture markedly. Labor was desperately needed to insure the required speeding up of both agricultural and industrial production. There was a demand for railroad workers; stockyards, packing, and canning companies voiced an insatiable demand for help. Not only were the Texas recruiting agencies re-opened, but large numbers of Mexican nationals were imported through contract agreements between their government and the United States.

# Chapter II

# THE MEXICAN AND HIS JOB

## Rural Labor

A discussion of the role of the Mexican in Minnesota agriculture during the past decade should begin with a clear understanding of the principal sources from which Mexican labor was drawn during the war years. Prior to 1941 a large percentage of the labor needed in the beet work in Minnesota was recruited in the Twin City area from residents of the Mexican communities. With the coming of the war and the opening up of regular employment opportunities in industry to these people, recruitment of workers in the cities for agriculture was no longer successful. The fact that less than a dozen Twin City families worked in beets during the period from 1947 to 1952 points up the need of seeking workers outside Minneapolis and St. Paul. The points of recruitment for these workers shifted in 1941 from Minnesota to Mexico and to Texas.

### *Mexican Nationals*

Mexican nationals, unattached men brought in from Mexico through official arrangement made by that country's government with the United States departments of State and Labor, were first brought to Minnesota in 1943 as harvesters in the Minnesota sugar-beet fields which absorbed 350 of them. The Minnesota Valley and Fairmont Canning Companies employed 1,000 Mexican nationals in that year.

These men arrived and left as Mexican citizens; they entered under contract for agricultural work only and returned to their port of entry crossing the border as soon as their stipulated time had elapsed.

During 1944, 1945, and 1946, approximately 4,000 were imported and in 1947 the canneries employed 2,000 while 225 went to the beet fields. Because of the expense involved in transportation of each worker to and from Mexico, an amount of $153.70 which the employer was required to pay, most employers ceased to use Mexican nationals in 1948. There were only 42 of them in Minnesota that year. There were none in 1949 or 1950. In 1951 there were 1,305 Mexican nationals employed in Minnesota. In 1952 there were 1,057 nationals in the state. These figures were obtained from the Minnesota Division of Employment and Security.

### *Texas Mexicans*

Another classification comes under the general head of Texas Mexicans. They are natives of Texas, the state where practically all recruiting for Minnesota Mexican labor is conducted. They are American citizens, free to move about at will and enter the open labor market except in violation of contracts or other agreement. The Mexicans who have elected to make their permanent residence in this state are for the most part Texas natives.

### *Federal Government and Migration*

A report issued in January 1948 by the Extension Farm Labor Program of United States Department of Agriculture refers to the alarming war-time shortage of agricultural labor due to the shift of workers from the field to the factory, a shift that initiated many of them into a way of life bringing larger financial returns and an increased sense of residential permanence.

Spurred by the hazards of such conditions, not only in the crises, but for future needs, the department instituted a system of field work throughout the territory especially affected, the North Central and Great Plains states, designed to concentrate on the improvement of relations between employers and workers. According to the plan originally worked out in Texas on behalf of its own people, the liaison men, whose assignment is to achieve this betterment of conditions, are not special pleaders for the cause of either employers or employees. They are equally accessible to both sides for discussion of problems that arise, and their aid in solving these problems is solely directed toward obtaining cooperation from both parties to existing contracts.

Complaints from workers concerning what have been miserable housing conditions, complicated by refusal of various communities along the route of their migration to grant shelter or sanitary facilities, have been largely met by the setting up of reception centers at strategic points. On the other hand, charges by employers of unreliability on the part of workers in fulfilling the terms of the contract in respect to hours, thoroughness of performance, etc., are investigated and discussed with the workers.

All the effort involved is directed toward achieving the best possible adjustment between the great demand for agricultural workers and the capacity of migrant workers for supplying it. According to the details of the report, the technique being worked out is obtaining solid results in the shape of a healthy trend toward mutual respect and understanding. An organized effort is also being made to stagger migration in such a way that Texas crops and those in the northern states, properly dovetailed, shall provide more nearly continuous employment.

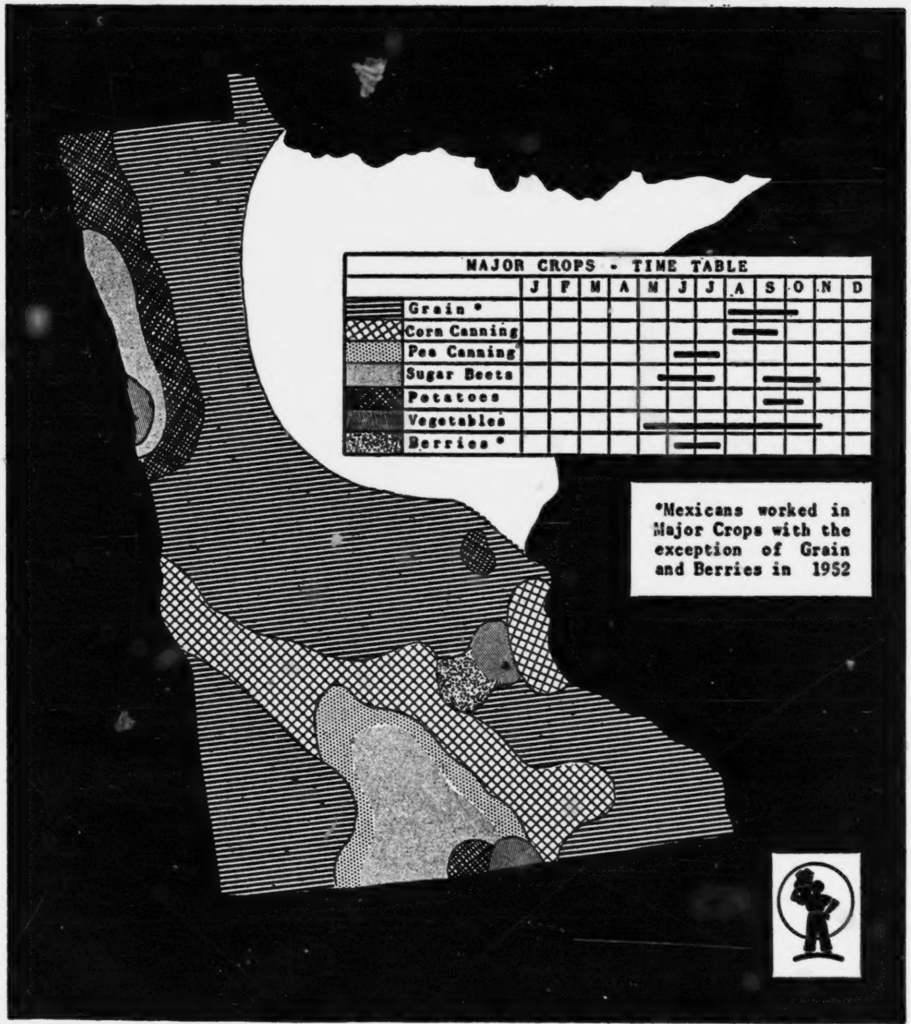
San Antonio is the main Texas starting point for the migrants headed for Minnesota's beet fields and canning areas, their route lying through Kansas City.

### *The Sugar Beet Industry*

The sugar-beet growing areas of Minnesota lie in two rather widely separated parts of the state. They are found in the Red River Valley, mainly throughout the area between Moorhead and Warren, in the territory adjacent to the processing factory at East Grand Forks and in the region centering in Chaska and in the Minnesota River Valley.

For the cultivation of their Minnesota holdings, the American Crystal Sugar Company recruited Texas Mexicans in 1948, 1949, and 1950. In 1951 about 4,800 Texas Mexicans came to

## MINNESOTA'S MAJOR CROPS


MAJOR CROPS - TIME TABLE
J F M A M J J A S O N D
Grain *
Corn Canning
Pea Canning
Sugar Beets
Potatoes
Vegetables
Berries *
*Mexicans worked in Major Crops with the exception of Grain and Berries in 1952

Prepared by Minnesota Division of Employment and Security

Minnesota to work in beets as well as 1,107 Mexican nationals. In 1952, 4,900 Texas Mexicans and 1,057 nationals were in beet work.

A report from the Farm Placement Service states that in 1951 during the season when migratory workers were needed, only 60 per cent of the normal supply required could be recruited from domestic sources. Foreign labor was imported from the Bahaman, Jamaican and Barbados Islands of the British West Indies as well as from Mexico. The workers from the West Indies pay their own transportation one way.

### *The Cultivation of Beets*

The northward journey of the seasonal migrants usually begins in May and by the time of their arrival in Minnesota the beet farmers have already done their planting and it is time for what is known as the blocking and thinning process which entails chopping out plants that overcrowd rows, thus leaving a space of twelve or eighteen inches between the beet groups. Thinning, a part of the same process, requires eliminating either with the hoe or by hand all but one of the beet plants in each group. This takes from three to four weeks.

Once or twice during the summer the fields must be hoed with a particular type of implement to keep the soil loose and free of weeds, but following that operation there is a period of from six to eight weeks before the harvest when the fields need no further attention. Workers in the Red River Valley area usually find work for the interim on the neighboring wheat and potato farms and those in the vicinity of Chaska keep busy de-tasseling and picking sweet corn.

The Texas Mexicans are free to find this employment as they choose, and the Mexican nationals are moved, under their contract, to localities in need of their work. The fact that Minnesota crop requirements can be dovetailed in point of time means that laborers are sure of continuous employment for the summer, and is a large factor in their willingness to work here. The work season in beets has been shortened for many Mexicans who formerly remained for the harvesting which occurs in October or even early November. The harvesting of beets has become about 90 per cent mechanized within the past five years. In 1952 not more than 600 Mexicans remained in Minnesota to harvest beets.

### *Wages in the Beet Fields*

Since 1934, under the provisions of the Sugar Act, wage levels in the beet fields are determined by the Secretary of Agriculture, after reviewing the evidence submitted at public hearings arranged by the Department of Agriculture, at which time both workers and employers submit evidence. The wage levels when established are considered a fair and equitable wage in the area where the work is done.

The Texas Mexicans are paid about August 1 for thinning and hoeing, the pay being by the acre and not the hour so that they may work as long as they wish. The rate of pay for thinning and hoeing in 1952 varied from $21.50 per acre where the method of finger thinning was used to $18.00 per acre where cross cultivation was in effect. The wages in 1952 were slightly less than those paid in 1951 when the growers in the Chaska district paid a bonus for remaining for the hoeing and weeding until July 25th.

Irving Anderson, Farm Employment Supervisor in the Minnesota Division of Employment and Security, points out that the bonus was discontinued because chemicals were put to use in 1952 which made the thinning and hoeing jobs much easier.

The rate of pay for the harvesting of beets in 1952 was $23.00 per acre.

In 1948 when the Governor's Interracial Commission published its first study of the Mexican in Minnesota, the average migrant Mexican family consisted of five workers earning a total of $1,915.00 during the season in beet work. The superintendent of the Crystal Sugar Company's plant at Chaska informed the Commission that the number of working members of Texas Mexican families in 1952 averaged four with each person making $276.00 giving each family a total of $1,104.00 for the season exclusive of the harvest. Of the 258 Mexicans employed in the Chaska district in 1952, only 28 remained for the harvest because of the extensive use of machinery.

There are some families in which there are many more workers than the average mentioned above while in other young families where the children are less than fourteen years of age, there will be but one or two workers. The earnings are based upon the acreage covered in the contract; the acreage included in the contract of necessity is determined by the number of persons in a family who may work. Children under fourteen years of age cannot legally be employed in beet work.

Employing farmers guarantee the Mexicans' bills in the nearby town stores from the time of arrival until August 1st when the first checks are due. Usually the employer pays these bills out of the wages due, retaining the remainder for the workers. The final payment for the few now remaining for the beet harvest is made by the grower after harvesting is completed. When the harvester leaves Minnesota he is paid an additional $3.00 per acre for each acre he has harvested as a bonus for having remained in the territory for the entire season. The last payment is usually made in December after the year's accounting has been done.

There may be a good deal of misunderstanding about the economic aspects of the beet-worker's life, but it must be made clear that there is no exploitation on the part of the individual employers where wages are concerned, since these are set by the government. It is true that the beet-field earnings in a season are not sufficient to support a family for twelve months, but considering that the period of work in the fields is completed in a total of 65 days, it can be looked upon only as seasonal employment and the compensation is proportionately higher than in other forms of agriculture in this state.

## *Earnings in the Vegetable Area*

Texas Mexicans are also employed in Minnesota in the Hollandale area where onions, asparagus, cabbages, and potatoes are grown. In the fall of 1950 the state Industrial Commission made a survey in this area. The survey revealed that there were 800 Texas Mexican migrants in the vicinity.

The local going rates at the time were as follows: Weeding onions—60 cents per hour for adults, 40 cents per hour for children 12 years or over. The average rate for picking and topping onions was approximately ten cents per bushel and eight cents was paid for picking potatoes. An individual with the help of his entire family—wife and children—might pick approximately 100 bushels of onions a day or 200 bushels of potatoes. The average earnings per day for an adult with the aid of his family ranged from $20.00 to $25.00.

In diversified crops near Hollandale it is possible for a family of five workers to earn from $1,800 to $2,600 during a season in Minnesota.

### *The Growth of the Canning Industry*

With the fairly recent but very rapid growth of the canning industry in Minnesota an important new field for Mexican labor has developed. As of 1947, there were 13 canning factories in the region of the state lying south and southwest of the Twin Cities, each one of them in the market for a quota of these workers for cultivation and harvesting of the corn, beans, and peas which comprises the products put out by the companies. Some of the Texas-born migrants also work in the processing factories established nearby, but this activity is closed to the Mexican nationals whose contract with the government stipulates that they are hired for agricultural labor only. In 1952 some of the 13 factories mentioned above were using Texas Mexican labor; others were employing citizens of the British West Indies.

Work in the fields consists largely of snapping and detasseling sweet corn, pitching pea vines, and picking string beans. Peas are harvested during July. While this is in progress laborers are divided into detachments of from 12 to 20, each being assigned to a given station in the whole pea viner area with a company foreman in charge. Until the work is done they remain at work at varied hours depending on the amount of the crop ready for harvesting each day. Food is brought to them. For this task all field laborers, American and Mexican alike, were paid at the same rate which in 1952 brought ninety cents per hour plus an incentive plan used by most companies which raised the total hourly wage to about one dollar. Those who picked string beans were paid three cents per pound. Corn snappers were paid $2.25 per ton in most areas. Some were paid $3.00 per ton.

For actual packing operations, the workers are housed in central camps established in the towns where the canneries are situated. Several were operating with three eight hour shifts in the summer of 1952. The hourly pay ranged from ninety to one dollar and ten cents.

### *Mexicans in the Canning Industry*

World War II was responsible for a rapid expansion in Minnesota's canning industry. Its largest employer, the Minnesota Valley Canning Company at LeSueur, increased its quota of 300 Mexican nationals in 1943 to 850 in 1946. About 100 Texas Mexicans were also employed in 1946. No Mexican nationals have been used by this company since 1948. It has relied heavily upon Bahamians imported through an agreement with the British Government. When a research worker from the Governor's Interracial Commission visited the LeSueur plant in the summer of 1952 she found 84 Texas Mexican men and 49 Texas Mexican women employed, some of them in the plant and others in the fields. In 1952, 600 Bahamians were employed by the Minnesota Valley Company and were moved about to work in the areas where labor was needed in the fields.

In the summer of 1952 queries were sent to 12 other canning companies who had been listed in a previous publication of the Governor's Interracial Commission as having requested Mexican labor during the 1947 season. The companies who were employing Mexicans in 1952 reported as follows:

### *The Fairmont Canning Company at Fairmont*

No Mexican nationals have been used since 1947. In 1952, 250 Texas Mexicans were employed to pick string beans and were used later as in-plant workers. The personnel manager remarked that in general the Mexican in-plant worker was a good worker and very few complaints as to the quality and quantity of the work had been received.

### *The Lakeside Canning Company of Spring View*

100 Texas Mexicans were employed. The men worked at the pea viners; the men and women picked beans between the pea and corn packs. During the corn pack the men picked corn and the women above 16 were given work inspecting corn in the plant. The superintendent of the plant reported that he found most of the Mexicans to be good workers and that the women for the most part were better and more on the job than the men.

### *The Big Stone Canning Company at Arlington*

Fourteen Texas Mexicans were employed in 1952. They were reported to be satisfactory workers.

Information gathered from the letters which the Commission received from the managers of the canning companies who have employed Mexicans in the past or are now employing them leads to the conclusion that several factors enter into the explanation of the decreased number of Mexicans employed by these companies.

Not enough Mexicans could be recruited to supply the labor demand a few years ago. The canners began to recruit labor from the British West Indies and the Bahama Islands. Some employers found these workers to be more reliable than the Mexicans. The employer is required to pay the transportation of the Mexican national both ways and that of the West Indian worker only one way. Because of trouble involved in finding a dependable labor supply, according to some canners, they began to invest in corn detasseling machines and other labor-saving equipment. For example, one plant manager said that he had last employed Texas Mexicans in 1949 and had found them undependable as he did not know from one day to the next if they would report for work. His company bought six corn picking machines which do the work of 60 field corn pickers and in 1952 he managed with 40 Bahamians.

Largely dependent upon weather conditions, work in the canning industry varies in its demands, there being very little work on some days and a great amount on others. The field work is tedious, requiring constant stooping and bending, especially during the hot days when much has to be accomplished. For this reason it is increasingly difficult to recruit American labor for such jobs. Offer of employment to Texas Mexicans in the form of individual work contracts was made in 1950 by the Pacific Division of a canning company which also operates in Minnesota. The improved employment record with this type of personnel practice was striking. Such a plan should prove equally effective in Minnesota.

As to the schedule of work, most plants reported that the Texas Mexicans came about June 1 and remained until about October 1.

## Urban Labor

Studies of the Mexican community in Minnesota reveal that ambition for his children is a strongly motivating factor in the individual Mexican's plan for life. The more intelligent and forward-looking Mexican finds a place where he can take root in a community rather than moving with the crops.

Coming from a country whose ancient caste system had bred in him a passive acceptance of conditions which he felt helpless to change, the Mexican's arrival in the United States made him realize that life here is not necessarily static. He soon learned that under schedules of seasonal employment in the fields his children were handicapped so far as regular schooling was concerned. Schooling, he was told, was essential for progress on this side of the border.

The obvious reaction of the Mexican to his new environment after he had oriented himself was to move to urban centers where a family stood a better chance for steady work and his children would be given better opportunities. As is mentioned in another chapter, this process of transfer was accelerated by the depression of the early thirties, when relief was urgently needed and it was found that the cities maintained higher relief standards and hence provided higher allowances than were available in the rural districts.

## *Saint Paul*

A study of what might be called the over-all employment situation among St. Paul Mexicans was made in 1946 through the joint effort of the Neighborhood House and the International Institute. About half the colony was covered in the survey which showed that many men who, with their wives and families, formerly worked in the beet fields now were employed in industry in St. Paul, West St. Paul, and South St. Paul. The breakdown by industries then employing Mexican residents which follows shows that over 77% of the population were employed in non-agricultural pursuits. In tabulation, the survey figures run as follows:

| Type of Employment | Men | Women | Total (295) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Packing Houses | 110 | 14 | 124 |
| Railroads | 30 | 0 | 30 |
| Beet Fields | 66 | 0 | 66 |
| Textile Mills | 20 | 5 | 25 |
| Miscellaneous | 44 | 6 | 50 |

Of those listed as miscellaneous, 21 are accounted for as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| American Hoist and Derrick Co. | 8 |
| Griffin Wheel Co. | 2 |
| St. Paul Barrel and Drum Co. | 4 |
| Street Railway Company | 2 |
| Gardening | 1 |
| Dry Cleaning | 1 |
| Cooperage | 1 |
| Bookkeeping | 2 |

Under the sponsorship of the Governor's Interracial Commission, students from the Sociology Class of Sister Mary Edward at the College of St. Catherine took a survey among the Mexican members of the parish of Our Lady of Guadelupe Church on St. Paul's west side in the fall of 1952.

The students visited 128 homes and gleaned the following information concerning the employment of both the chief wage earner and the wives who were working outside the home.

| Types of Employment | Men | Women | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Packing Houses | 40 | 12 | 52 |
| Railroads | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| Butcher | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| Construction Workers | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| Military Services | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Office Work | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Fisher's Chocolate Co. | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| American Hoist and Derrick | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Simon Mogilner Co. | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Montgomery Wards | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Star Laundry | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Butwins | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Foreman | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Checkers | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Working with Chickens | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Barrel Co. | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Capitol Flour Co. | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Energy Manufacturing Co. | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Griggs Cooper | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Gopher Stamps and Dies | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Miller Hospital | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Minnesota Mining | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Northern States Power | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Rayette Laboratories | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| St. Paul Hotel | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Snyder's Drug | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Straus Knitting Mills | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Textile Mills | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Twin City Transit Co. | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Waldorf Paper Co. | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Plasterer | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Leadmelter | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Crane Operator | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Maintenance | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Janitor | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Mail Tender | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Stockyard Worker | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Casual Labor | 26 | 0 | 26 |

Two men were reported unemployed. One was retired and two were disabled. One wife said her husband was employed but she didn't know what his occupation was. One child stated that her mother worked but she didn't know what she did. The father of one family was deceased.

This survey indicates that more and varied work has become available to the Mexican living in St. Paul.

Following a precedent of more than thirty years standing, the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad Company employs Mexicans in its Twin Cities mechanical department. In 1952 there were four Mexicans working in the roundhouse; their earnings were $257.88 per month. Throughout 1952 there were from 6 to 10 Mexicans working as section laborers earning from $2,700 to $2,900 yearly as compared with annual earnings per man of $2,524.50 in 1947 when the Governor's Interracial Commission made a previous survey.

The Twin City Rapid Transit Company reported that 11 Mexicans were employed as track laborers in 1952. They were paid $1.61 per hour. No Mexican motormen were employed in 1952, although there had been two in 1947. The personnel manager explained that this fact was not due to discrimination but rather to the cutting down of employee numbers due to the changeover to bus transportation where only one man was required on a vehicle. Men were retained according to seniority.

Six Mexican men were working as repairmen and were receiving from $1.70 to $1.85 per hour. Two Mexican women were employed as car cleaners earning $1.37 hourly.

In the summer of 1947, the Governor's Interracial Commission addressed queries to personnel managers of the St. Paul packing houses who are the largest urban employers of Mexican labor. These men were contacted again in 1952.

Swift and Company which had listed 100 Mexicans as being employed in 1947, had increased the number to 135 in 1952. As in 1947, 15 of these were women. Whereas the average laborer had earned $2,400 at Swifts in 1947, the amount had risen to over $3,000 annually in 1952.

The employment manager at Armour Company said that 104 Mexicans were working there in 1952, 73 of them being men, and 31 women. There were 60 Mexicans employed at the Armour plant in 1947. Mexicans engage in all types of work at the plant from slaughtering to processing and cutting. The normal work week is 40 hours with some overtime. Men are paid a minimum of $1.41 per hour; women receive a minimum of $1.32. The manager reported that some of the Mexicans had been with his concern for 15 years. Those who have established themselves in St. Paul maintain good health and are reliable workers. At Armours' 98 per cent of the Mexican employees belong to labor unions.

Two more of St. Paul's major industries, the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company and the Seeger Refrigerator Company also employ Mexicans. In 1947, 15 were employed by Minnesota Mining. In 1952, a spokesman for the company said no records of nationality or race were kept but that she felt from observation that at least that number were still employed and she felt quite confident that the number was probably larger, as the company keeps growing and has a well-balanced personnel made up of people from all national groups represented in St. Paul. It was estimated that less than five Mexicans were employed in the company's laboratories.

The Commission's research worker was unable to determine the exact number of persons of Mexican origin employed by Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company or the Seeger Refrigerator Company in 1952.

Mexicans are employed in the public services as well as in private industry in St. Paul. Six Mexicans are members of the city's police force and one is a fireman. The St. Paul Post Office employs a Mexican as a postal clerk. A Mexican works as a recreational director in the municipal recreation department.

The Chief of Police as well as the Chief of the Fire Department expressed satisfaction with the type of service rendered by their Mexican employees. They had found them to be intelligent, willing, and dependable at all times.

## *Minneapolis*

In May 1947 a survey conducted by the Governor's Interracial Commission took into consideration the occupational situation among the Mexicans living in Minneapolis. Of the 91 persons polled, 47 were men and 44 were women. Of this number 28 reported no occupation, either because of unemployment or indifference to the survey. Following are the figures:

| | Men | Women |
|---|---|---|
| Laborers | 19 | 0 |
| Skilled workers | 3 | 0 |
| Foundry workers | 8 | 0 |
| Cabinet maker | 1 | 0 |
| Construction workers | 2 | 0 |
| Junk dealers | 1 | 0 |
| Agricultural laborers (Truck garden, peas, and beets) | 2 | 0 |
| Crater | 1 | 0 |
| Machinists | 1 | 0 |
| Engineer | 1 | 0 |
| Truck driver | 1 | 0 |
| Power Machine operator | 0 | 3 |
| Punch Press operator | 0 | 1 |
| Laundry workers | 0 | 2 |
| Domestic servants | 0 | 5 |
| No occupation | 5 | 23 |
| Unemployed | 2 | 10 |

This report resulted from a study of Mexicans living in North Minneapolis, the principal settlement there, and while this represented slightly less than 33 per cent of the estimated Minneapolis population of 300, it did cover the majority of adult Mexicans available and willing to work.

In the autumn of 1952, the Governor's Interracial Commission sponsored another survey in this area. Homes were visited by students from Professor Paul Berry's Sociology class at Macalester College. It was found that there were fewer Mexican families living in this district than there had been in 1947. Some who had bettered themselves economically had moved to other parts of the city. Twenty-eight families were visited. As a result of the survey it was noted that more of the fathers were employed in the skilled trades than had been in 1947. It was observed that proportionately more of the mothers were employed and that while five women had been working as domestic servants in 1947, none were in 1952. Following are the figures:

| Types of Employment | Men | Women |
|---|---|---|
| Laborers | 12 | 0 |
| Skilled workers | 7 | 0 |
| Machinists | 1 | 0 |
| Technician | 1 | 0 |
| Truck driver | 2 | 0 |
| Bus driver | 1 | 0 |
| Power Machine operator | 0 | 1 |
| Assembly worker | 0 | 1 |
| Silk screen processor | 0 | 1 |
| Mangle operator | 0 | 1 |
| Fish packer | 0 | 3 |
| Laundry worker | 0 | 1 |
| Waitress | 0 | 2 |
| Clerk | 0 | 1 |
| On relief | 1 | .. |
| In the Army | 1 | .. |
| Unemployed | 1 | .. |
| Housewives | .. | 17 |

In one family the mother was the chief wage earner.

## *Labor Unions*

The history of unionization of Mexican workers in Minnesota is very brief. Several attempts to organize these groups in the middle 1930's failed. These abortive efforts were sponsored largely by local leaders not of the Mexican group who aimed to organize agricultural workers.

Approximately fifty per cent of the workers did organize an association. Later the group secured a charter from the Minnesota State Federation of Labor. A great deal of work was done through the offices of the President and the Secretary of the State Federation. Several conferences were held with the superintendents of the American Crystal Sugar Company. Investigations of working and housing conditions were made in the field and discussions concerning wages, wage settlements, and child labor were held. Though progress in improving conditions was made through these efforts, many difficulties in organization developed. Many workers dropped their membership when the growing season ended. Problems were met in negotiating with hundreds of beet growers and situations created by irresponsible members were ever present.

The latter threatened on one occasion to destroy crops and thereby provoked a considerable public opinion against the organized worker. In a period of unemployment characterized by real hardship for many families, the threat of loss of work because of union affiliation was very real and many workers dropped their membership.

The local union was dissolved and its charter returned. Other attempts have been made subsequently to organize the beet as well as other agricultural workers. Results have been negative and no further unionization of this group of Mexicans has materialized.

With the war years and the opening up of industrial employment to persons of Mexican descent, some have become affiliated with organized labor as was indicated by the report from the Armour Company in South St. Paul.

To what extent the group has affiliated with labor or assumed membership in the locals is hard to answer. For the C. I. O., with whose various units these industrial workers are mainly identified, enrolls members without reference to color, creed, or race and does not break down its records into classifications along these lines.

An official speaking for the Minneapolis Moline, C. I. O. union, Local 1146, calls the Mexicans good union men. None of them has yet, he says, shown any inclination to take over leadership, but none has ever caused trouble of any kind.

C. I. O. Local 1139, an amalgamated unit comprising mainly workers in the metal machine shops, reports that an estimate of 25 Mexicans in a total of 4,200 members is probably on the liberal side, and also that there is nothing to differentiate them from their fellow workers so far as capacity and performance are concerned.

As characterized by Rodney C. Jacobson, secretary of the Minnesota State C. I. O. council, Mexicans are capable union members, thorough and loyal. They work well with others, he says, and are interested in bettering themselves through education. Mexicans read material published by the C. I. O., not only carefully, but critically and show definite signs of being politically conscious.

## Chapter III

# THE MEXICAN'S HOUSE AND FAMILY

### *Saint Paul Housing*

Minnesota's greatest concentration of Mexican residents is to be found in St. Paul. Nearly all of its 3,800 Mexicans live in one or another of four districts, the most populous being the general section of Riverview (the so-called West Side) adjacent to the end of the Robert Street bridge. Since the floods of 1951 and '52 which caused much damage in this area there has been a greater tendency for Mexican families to seek quarters in other parts of the city or to move up to the hill which rises behind the Mexican colony in this district.

The other settlements are found on the low-lying land beneath the Third and Sixth Street bridges, along Phalen Creek below the Seventh Street bridge level and on Jackson and Mississippi Streets north and east of the down-town district. It is considered that a survey of housing in St. Paul's Mexican districts gives a fair idea of the quarters occupied by the average Mexican families in any urban community of Minnesota in which they are found.

A survey completed in March 1937 by the State Relief Agency with the assistance of the St. Paul Planning Board and the Ramsey County Welfare Board provides accurate and detailed information on the housing of the Mexican population in the pre-war years. In the light of war-time restrictions on building and major repairs and the post-war housing shortage, this report would not be amiss, for the housing described in this report is the same as that occupied by members of the Mexican community today.

The study involved the condition of the building, the number living in it, the legal description of the property, the land value, the building value, and the official determination of the habitations fitness for occupancy. The survey covered

164 residences, 17 of which were box cars. These residences housed 341 families or about two-thirds of the resident Mexican population. Of the homes studied, excluding the box cars, 63 or 38 per cent were found to be unsuitable for human housing. Forty-five of the homes were classified thus because they were structurally unsound while 18 were declared unfit for habitation because of poor sanitary facilities.

The valuation of these homes ranged from $80 to $3,500. Twenty of the houses were valued at less than $400. Only one unit studied was owned by its Mexican occupant. Rents paid ranged from $5.00 per month per unit to $15.00 with an average of $10.00.

The commission is indebted to the International Institute of St. Paul for findings of a survey made in 1946 when nearly 300 homes, representing a sampling of the four neighborhoods mentioned, plus a few from South St. Paul, were visited.

A bright note in the Institute survey revealed that 40 Mexican families scattered throughout St. Paul had bought their homes. Purchase prices ranged from $1,500 to $3,000 and the investigators agreed with analysts in other cities who say that once Mexicans become rooted to a place their interest in improving its premises becomes evident. Repeated proof of this was seen in the Minneapolis and St. Paul surveys sponsored by the Interracial Commission in 1952.

A general summary of the International Institute report includes the statement that "the housing of the Mexican community is the worst in St. Paul." Low rents averaging between $15 to $16 monthly were paid by 89 per cent of the householders polled. Landlords pleaded that insufficient returns do not warrant expenditure for repairs. In many cases the dwellings were reported entirely unfit for habitation. These houses, at least in the poorer sections, were usually old houses of frame structure that had been converted to multiple units to accommodate three or four families. Very few of them had central heating. Most were supplied with electricity and running water. Gas stoves were found in some kitchens. Many used kerosene or coal stoves for cooking.

Overcrowding was the rule in most of the houses, although in the majority of cases the space was shared with relatives. This situation militated against efficient housekeeping and put undue strain upon sanitary facilities available, such as they were. Although there was running water in all homes, some did not have bath tubs.

The Institute Survey pointed up the fact that through the younger generation of Mexicans, a gradual but very slow improvement in living standards was being realized. While prevailing conditions made it impossible to do much about the actual housing, the younger members of the community were beginning to buy electric refrigerators and washing machines.

The survey showed that the Mexican family income was often strained by the necessary outlay for fuel in many houses where dilapidation had reached an advanced stage in which doors and windows were warped until they no longer fit and where storm windows were non-existent.

Box cars were still used as housing units by several families. At least one dwelling in the center of the Mexican community had no flooring other than sod.

As in any other group of persons, housekeeping standards varied from poor to excellent. In view of the general conditions of poor housing, it was not surprising to receive reports of rats biting children and of the great need for rodent control in the area. This is equally true today when the rats have invaded some of the finest residential sections of the city as well as the poorer areas.

In 1952, under the sponsorship of the Governor's Interracial Commission, students from the Sociology class of Sister Mary Edwards at the College of St. Catherine conducted a housing survey among 128 Mexican families living on St. Paul's West Side. Many of these families lived in the same structures which were described in the survey made by the International Institute in 1946. Flood waters covered much of this area in 1952 but despite the damage done by the flood and the fact that the structures are six years older points of improved conditions for family living were noted. The students were often surprised after viewing a drab and weatherbeaten exterior to step into a house which had been tastefully painted, amply furnished, and supplied with electric conveniences and a TV set.

In the survey, it was found that forty families lived in single units, 55 in duplexes, 18 in four unit dwellings, 3 in five unit structures, and 12 in apartments.

It was encouraging to learn that 60 or almost 50% of the families owned their homes. In the survey of 300 families made by the International Institute in 1946, only 13% were home owners.

The rentals paid for the 66 rented homes ranged from $15.00 to $40.00 per month with a median of $25.00.

The average number of persons living in each household was 5.7 while the average number of rooms per unit amounted to 5.1. By official census standards a percentage of 1.51 or more persons to a room is rated as overcrowding.

Of the 128 homes visited, 39 were in need of repair, the principal needs being plastering, painting and papering, and attention to steps and stairways. General repairs were needed in eight homes.

Only twelve of the houses had central heating. Eight used woodburning stoves. The largest number used oil space heater stoves and 26 had coal heaters.

Gas ranges provided cooking facilities in 115 homes, electric in two, coal in four and a combination gas and wood range was used in one kitchen.

Private toilet facilities were present in 105 homes. Other families shared these facilities.

### *Public Housing*

There are two public housing developments in St. Paul. The John J. McDonough units are bounded by Jackson Street, Wheelock Parkway, Arlington, and Mississippi streets. The

Franklin D. Roosevelt units are bordered by Maryland and Hazelwood streets, the North West railway tracks and a wooded area.

The public housing administrator in St. Paul stated in March, 1953, that his office had placed eight Mexican families in the John J. McDonough units, and four in the Roosevelt quarters. There are four other families who have been accepted. They are waiting for assignments. An additional six families are being investigated and will probably prove eligible for assignment.

Since December 1st, 1952, 23 applications of Mexicans were rejected by the housing authorities because the applicants were not citizens. About 100 applications for entry into the housing units by Mexicans were rejected for a similar reason prior to December 1st, 1953.

### *Minneapolis Housing*

The Minneapolis Mexican community is almost exclusively settled in two districts. One lies along Plymouth Avenue between Washington and Lyndale Avenues North and the other is found on the South Side adjacent to Seven Corners. Both are labeled blighted areas by sociologists. Poor housing characterizes such localities.

In 1947 the Governor's Interracial Commission conducted a survey of 42 families in the North Minneapolis area. It was found that two-thirds of the Mexican families were exclusive occupants of the dwelling in which they lived. In instances where space was shared it was in almost every case with relatives.

Eighteen of the structures investigated were either duplexes or two-family houses of some other type. Nine families lived in buildings designed for three and four dwelling units. Six inhabited detached single-unit houses and five families were settled in apartments. Household investigations disclosed that the number in each unit ranged from two to twelve persons and that the family quarters varied in size from one to nine rooms.

A breakdown of statistical figures showed the average number of persons in individual households to be 6.1 while the average number of rooms per unit was 5.1.

The amount paid for rent, as reported for 27 of the dwelling units ranged from $8 to $36 a month, a median rate of $15.00.

Slightly more than half of the units surveyed were reported in good condition, requiring only minor repairs. The rest were in worse shape, the principal needs cited being for painting, papering, and attention to bathroom equipment.

Thirty-eight of the 42 units had private toilet facilities, two shared these with dwellers in the same building, and one had only outdoor arrangements. Twenty-nine had either private bathtubs or showers, four shared their conveniences with neighbors, and seven had neither. Only eight were provided with central heating. Coal and wood stoves were used for cooking in 16 of the units. One had a kerosene stove and the remaining 25 had gas or electricity. All of the dwellings had electric lights.

For comparative purposes it seemed wise to the Governor's Interracial Commission to resurvey this area of Minneapolis again in 1952. It was found that there were considerably fewer Mexican families living in this district. The names and addresses of 33 families were obtained from the Director of Unity Settlement House and a survey was undertaken under the sponsorship of the Commission. Students from the Sociology class of Professor Paul Berry at Macalester College made the home visits. They were unable to contact some of the families but 28 homes were surveyed.

It was found that nine of the twenty-eight homes were owned. Rentals for the others ranged from $16.80 to $30.00 per month with a median rent of $24.00.

The average number of persons in each household was 5.6 while the number of rooms per unit was 5.3. These figures show somewhat less crowding than in 1947.

All but one of the units had private toilet facilities. One family shared bathroom facilities with another family.

Most of the families used oil space heater stoves for heating. Four had coal heaters and one used a wood stove for heating. Gas stoves were used for cooking purposes in all but one home where a kerosene stove was in use.

All but nine of the 28 units visited were found to be in good repair with the dwellings of the home owners in much better condition than the rented structures. Six buildings needed painting outside, three required general repairs, and three had badly worn steps and stairways.

Eight families lived in single houses, nine in duplexes, one of which was owned by the Mexican resident, four in fourplexes, and the remainder in apartment buildings. Family quarters varied in size from one to nine rooms.

### *Rural Housing*

Although Minnesota's Mexican population came here originally at the request of American growers and food processers, adequate housing was not always provided.

In an agreement drawn up by the governments of the United States and Mexico regarding migrant labor in 1951 for use as a contract binding upon both growers and workers,

it is specified, as was the case from the first importation of Mexican labor, that the grower was to supply proper housing for workers. The employer agreed to furnish without cost to the worker, hygienic lodgings adequate to the climatic conditions of the area and not inferior to the average type which are generally furnished to domestic workers in such areas. Such lodgings were to include blankets if necessary, beds, mattresses or cots. Quarters could not be overcrowded and adequate sanitary facilities were to be furnished.

The farmers as well as the tenants have not always lived up to the terms of this agreement. In 1950 Dr. and Mrs. David E. Henley, experienced researchers in the social field, made a study of the migratory workers in Minnesota for the Migrant Committee of the Minnesota Council of Churches and the Home Missions Council of North America. They traveled extensively throughout the state and found that housing for migrant workers in Minnesota might be classified as follows:

1. Barracks built for single men, some crowded, some good.
2. Abandoned farm houses and other buildings, some good, some possible, some easily capable of being made comfortable, and some in sad neglect.
3. Small but livable houses built especially for the summer use of migrant families.

In 1951 a representative from the Governor's Interracial Commission made an inspection of housing in Minnesota. While he accepts the Henley classification as a good summary of the situation he points out that tents, make-shift shelters, broken down one-room cabins, converted chicken coops, deserted farm houses, and old barns still provide quarters for migrant workers. He saw several instances where the occupants slept and ate in one room.

In contrast, one canning company official took the representative on a tour and proudly pointed out excellent housing to which the same families returned year after year. Mexican beet workers in 1952 told a researcher from the Interracial Commission when she visited Sibley County that they enjoyed the period they spent at the above-mentioned cannery each year because the facilities were so fine. Good housing could do much to encourage reliable workers to come back to Minnesota summer after summer.

In fairness it should be pointed out that in some instances the poor houses provided for migrant workers are not greatly inferior to those of some farm families in the region. In some cases, their standards for various reasons have risen, but slowly.

Good conditions prevail in most of the camps set up by the canning companies. They maintain barrack-type housing at the cannery centers. Workers eat in the company commissary. When the corn, pea, and bean crops require on-the-spot attention, the harvesters are sheltered in mobile units consisting of trailers and portable bunk-houses which are moved to different stations in the field areas as need arises.

In 1951 the Minnesota Legislature provided for the establishment of a Migratory Labor Camp Code. This code which has been formulated by the State Department of Health sets up standards for housing and sanitation. The code became effective in February 1952. The Health Department may make inspections but unfortunately has no enforcement powers. Even so, it is hoped that this code will in some measure help to make better housing a reality.

## Family Life

Mexicans in the United States, both citizens and native Mexicans, contrive to maintain a family solidarity that is noticed by every observer. Despite continued struggle with poverty, poor housing, and the bewildering experiences associated with recent arrival in a new society so different from the one he has left, the Mexican keeps family bonds strong.

In a report of active educational and welfare work among Mexican workers in the Red River Valley beet-fields, Sister Clare, O.S.B. of St. Joseph's School, Moorhead, Minnesota, mentions the affectionate respect accorded grandparents, saying that whatever economic stress may be, Mexican parents can always count upon kind family care in their old age.

Large families are the rule in the St. Paul community, the state's largest, but it is not uncommon for a household that already seems overcrowded to take in children, sometimes related, sometimes not, who are left motherless or homeless.

While the young people of the St. Paul area seldom marry at the extremely youthful ages common in Mexico, they settle down to domesticity when younger on the average than Americans. The most usual ages for marriage are between 16 and 20 for girls, and from 18 to 23 for men. Ordinarily they marry within their own nationality group.

The survey taken by the International Institute in 1946 showed that 259 families had a total of 1,057 children, or an average of 4.1 children to a family. In the two surveys sponsored by the Commission in 1952, it was found that the Minneapolis Mexican families had an average of 3.9 children per family and the St. Paul families the same average as previously noted, namely 4.1 children per family.

Employment conditions during World War II were such that, for the first time, Mexican women in numbers took jobs outside the home. A considerable number of these continue to work, citing the high cost of living and ambition for their children's welfare as compelling reasons. In 11 of the 28 families visited by the Macalester students in 1952, the mothers were employed outside the home. Thirty-three of the mothers from the 128 homes visited by the students from the College of St. Catherine, were thus employed. To just what extent this change in deep-rooted custom will affect the organization and general character of traditional Mexican family life is hard to say. The Director of the Neighborhood House on the West Side has observed that Mexican parents in that area are much less authoritarian than they used to be and do not supervise their children nearly as closely, especially the teen-agers.

However, that change in family life is not yet drastic seems to be indicated by the continuing habit of both widows and widowers to re-marry soon after the first mate dies. The acquisition of step-children in large numbers, seems to be considered no barrier on either side. Some welfare workers point out that this situation may be somewhat affected by the aid now given through the Social Security Act to dependent children. In 1946 there were twenty-nine families in the St. Paul community receiving this aid.

As always with foreign nationality groups, the question of language injects itself into almost all phases of life, and there are Mexican children who, like their contemporaries in every other national classification, have been made to feel like outsiders because their tongue is a strange one to the general population, and who sometimes pretend that they know only English. But unlike many new arrivals from other shores, they do not seem to consider altering their Spanish-type names to bring them into line with the average Anglo-Saxon phonetic equipment.

There are some exceptions to this latter generalization for many Spanish names given to boys are feminine, from the American standpoint, and cost their owners a good deal of heckling from neighborhood children. Another more important difference stems from the customary naming of children "Jesus." Although it is done by Mexicans in a reverent and altogether natural spirit which is likewise in line with a Spanish tradition of antiquity, the practice is apt to be misunderstood here, so the general rule when such cases occur is to use one of the child's other names, or perhaps to give him a new one.

Courtesy, which is an outstanding Mexican virtue, has its origin in the home where politeness seems to be the agreeable rule, whether between children and parents, or simply among the children. Nevertheless, it is observable that once the age of fourteen, or thereabout is reached, both girls and boys exhibit the same characteristics that mark adolescent youth everywhere. They are less patient, more assertive, and increasingly eager to throw off at least some degree of family restraint in favor of identification with the youth groups around them. Whether or not this is a step toward healthy assimilation into American society in general depends almost entirely upon the safeguards extended by that society to youth of Mexican descent.

## Chapter IV

# HEALTH, DELINQUENCY, AND DEPENDENCY UPON RELIEF

## Health

A consideration of health conditions prevailing among Minnesota's Mexicans logically includes a study of the physical effects engendered by the change of climate experienced in the course of transfer from their place of origin to this one in the United States. No such study is known to the Commission. There has been conjecture concerning the matter in connection with the wide incidence of tuberculosis and the upper respiratory diseases among the immigrant Mexicans here.

In certain Mexican states a handful of proprietors have undisputed rights over practically all the arable land as well as the peasants who cultivate it. Because of unbearable conditions immigration from these states reaches large figures. The majority of Mexican born persons living in Minnesota came from Michoacan and Guanajuate, both of them lying in Mexico's broad central plateau. Its altitude ranges from 4,000 to 8,000 feet, while Minnesota's average elevation above sea level is approximately 1,000 feet. The climate here exhibits far greater extremes of temperature in both summer and winter than the Mexican plateau. And our humidity rate is much greater.

A number of other factors that would be involved in reaching authoritative conclusions regarding the physical status of the Mexicans here has thus far proved a barrier to accurate estimation of the precise elements and influences governing their health.

### *Nationals*

Mexican nationals applying at the border for permission to enter our borders as agricultural laborers are given health tests by both Mexican and American officials. These tests include making X-rays of the subject's lungs and digestive tract and a smallpox vaccination. Once he is admitted, if he should be found suffering from heart, mental or venereal disease, or having some chronic ailment not contracted during or as a result of his employment in the United States, his contract with the United States government may be terminated. This may be done if it is found that he has developed a contagious disease while in the process of travel from his point of origin or entry to his destination in the United States.

The health of Mexican nationals while under contract in Minnesota is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture which employs field nurses. Government nurses were supplied until 1947 to supervise the health of nationals who worked both in the beet fields and the canneries. Texas Mexicans are on their own, unless they are ill or injured in the course of specified work. At the canning factories, where Texas Mexicans are employed, the company has one nurse or someone capable of giving first aid in each plant to care for the welfare of the employees. Should they be injured on the job, the Minnesota Workmen's Compensation Act may be invoked for medical care.

The assertion of close observers and social workers among the Mexicans that there is a gradual improvement in the health of the community would seem to be borne out by available figures. The reason for this improvement is variously assigned to the care and instruction given by visiting nurses, the teaching of hygiene in the schools, and the work of the free baby clinic to which mothers may take all the problems of infancy.

### *Permanent Residents*

In the Mankato area whose five counties include Blue Earth, Nicollet, Le Sueur, Faribault and Waseca, 261 Mexicans representing 72 families, were given the Mantoux test for tuberculosis. Ninety-nine of the subjects, or 37.9 per cent reacted positively. The chest X-rays then made showed 23 cases of childhood, or primary infection and eight cases where this had gone further. These cases were definitely active, one probably so. Four were inactive and three others gave rise to the conjecture that pathological causes might be present. All cases were in the incipient stage. The percentage of all Mantoux-tested subjects to show definite findings was 11.9.

Ramsey County, with the state's largest Mexican population, reports that in 1946 the Children's Preventorium cared for 10 Mexican children from six families out of a possible total of 64. At Ancker Hospital's tuberculosis pavilion there were two Mexican children out of a total of 225.

Although records are no longer kept which would indicate the national origins of patients in these Ramsey County Institutions the nurses do not feel that there has been an increase in the proportionate number of Mexican children receiving care.

The Glen Lake Sanatorium, Hennepin County's tuberculosis hospital, reports that in 1946 there were five Mexican patients and that a total of 20 Mexicans had been admitted there since 1939.

Four Mexican patients were being cared for at Glen Lake in 1947, three in 1948, four in 1949, three in 1950, and two in 1951.

From the State Department of Health comes a tabulation of death records among Minnesota Mexicans for the years 1950 and 1951. The report reads as follows:

| 1950—Total | Mexican deaths | 18 |
|---|---|---|
| Causes: | Diarrhea | 1 |
| | Tuberculosis | 2 |
| | Whooping cough | 2 |
| | Cancer | 5 |
| | Diabetes | 1 |
| | Vascular lesions | 1 |
| | Diseases of the heart | 2 |
| | Congenital malformations | 1 |
| | Birth injuries | 1 |
| | Other causes | 2 |

| 1951—Total | Mexican deaths | 12 |
|---|---|---|
| Causes: | Diarrhea | 1 |
| | Pneumonia | 3 |
| | Tuberculosis | 2 |
| | Vascular | 1 |
| | Congenital malformations | 1 |
| | Birth injuries | 1 |
| | Immaturity | 2 |
| | Other causes | 1 |

### *Mobile Units*

The Minnesota department of health is stepping up its activities among the migratory workers. Instructors in private and public schools are urged to get physical examinations for the children, so that serious ailments may be detected and checked.

The State Department of Health with the aid of the Clay County Christmas Seal Organization at Moorhead X-rayed 1,000 workers and their families in 1950. Seven cases of tuberculosis were found. The number of active cases of tuberculosis in the general population of Minnesota for 1952 was 2,212 or 7.23 per one hundred thousand persons.

In May 1951, the State Department of Health sent a mobile X-ray unit to Hollandale and examined both migrant and local children and adults.

## Delinquency

In measuring the traits of an individual we must take into consideration his attitude toward the laws of our nation, state, or municipality. The Commission consulted law enforcement officials and agencies for information concerning delinquency among Mexicans in Minnesota.

### *Saint Paul*

The state's largest Mexican colony in St. Paul presents no pressing police problem. Its crime record is exceptionally good. Its members rank well up among the law abiding elements of the city's population.

This is the consensus of authorities charged with law enforcement and the administration of the law in this jurisdiction. They include Ramsey County District and St. Paul judges, city and county prosecutors, the city police chief, the chief of the city detective division, and the county sheriffs.

Substantiating their opinions are St. Paul Police Department records and statistics of the population of Minnesota's two penal institutions. The authorities are unanimous on these points: the Mexicans in St. Paul get into very little trouble with the law. When they do commit offenses, the offenses are usually of a minor nature. Their arrests are largely for misdemeanors, seldom for felonies.

The Mexican's offenses seldom involve any persons but themselves and other Mexicans. The two most common offenses are drunkenness and fights with one another. The fights are frequently featured by cutting, but are not often serious. Weapons used are, for the most part, small pocket knives, or pen knives and little damage is done.

Their record of crimes for gain is surprisingly low, particularly in view of their impoverished conditions in many cases.

Occasionally, they commit sex offenses, but these seldom, if ever, involve perversion. They are most likely to be carnal knowledge of girls 18 years of age, but of an age at which, in Mexico, such knowledge would not constitute an offense.

In 1946 the Commission was informed that St. Paul police records for the period from January 1, 1946, to June 15, 1947, showed that in this period arrests of Mexicans totaled 136. Of these, 62 were made for drunkenness, two for disorderly conduct, two in connection with immigration regulations, one for vagrancy, one for loitering, and one for probation violation.

Arrests for assaults, nearly all the outgrowth of minor scuffles, totaled 36. Arrests for offenses involving property totaled seven for burglary, seven for larceny, two for automobile theft, one for illegal entry, and one for destruction of property. Five arrests were made in connection with sex offenses and three for delinquency. Arrests for traffic law violations totaled five—three for drunken driving and one each for leaving the scene of an accident and driving after revocation of a driver's license. Four of those arrested were women.

It should be noted that the above figures are only on arrests. They do not necessarily mean that this number of Mexicans were sentenced, imprisoned or even prosecuted. Statistics on these eventualities are not obtainable, as the court records have no breakdown by nationalities.

The St. Paul Police Department no longer keeps records of the national origin, race, or creed of offenders and could not furnish statistics concerning the number of Mexicans who may have been delinquent in 1951 or 1952. However, the Chief of Police as well as the Chief of the Detective Bureau assured the interviewer from the Commission that the record of the Mexican community in the city was equally as good, if not better than it had been at the time of our previous study.

The fact that very few Mexicans are sent to Minnesota's penal institutions is corroborated by the population figures at the Minnesota State Prison at Stillwater and the Reformatory at St. Cloud. During 1949 and 1950 only one Mexican was confined at Stillwater. In 1951 and 1952 there were two at the prison.

Figures in the Minnesota Division of Institutions show that during the year 1949 there were no Mexicans in the Reformatory and that there were two in 1950 and one in 1951.

From the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension comes the information that in 1950-51 Mexicans accounted for 2.7 per cent of all persons fingerprinted. In 1951-52 Mexicans made up only 1.3 per cent of the individuals fingerprinted.

### *Minneapolis*

Reports from Minneapolis, where the Mexican population is very much smaller than that of St. Paul, show for 1946 through the month of November, that there were only five arrests in the community. These were five men, all laborers, ranging in age from 20 to 26. Offenses were strong-arm robbery, car prowling, pawning of stolen merchandise, and second degree larceny.

A report from the Supervisor of the Juvenile Division of the Juvenile Court of Hennepin County in October, 1952 indicates that after checking the case loads it was found that five adult Mexican offenders had appeared in Hennepin District Court for various offenses during the year from September 1, 1951, until September 1, 1952. During that same fiscal period there were three juveniles of Mexican parentage who appeared in the Intake Department of the Probation Office and were not referred to Juvenile Court and three juveniles who did appear in Hennepin County Juvenile Court for various delinquencies.

## Dependency Upon Relief

The decade of the 1930's was a difficult one for the great majority of the Mexican population in Minnesota. Hundreds of families migrated from Texas to this state in search of agricultural work while many Minnesota residents not only traveled about Minnesota hoping to find employment but also went to Michigan, Montana, or Wisconsin for the same purpose.

### *The Thirties*

The story of the life of these families on the road and in the agricultural fields was not a pleasant one. Work was scarce and earnings inadequate when a contract was secured to support a family throughout the year. The average earning per family from beet-field work in Minnesota in 1936 was $315.68 while that of 1937 was $329.19. These earnings although approximately one-third higher than those reported in a study of beet-field workers on relief in Weld County, Colorado, were slightly less than those reported in the 1935 survey made by the Federal Children's Bureau of the annual earnings from hand work in the beet fields. In view of the fact that the average number of persons per family was 5.62, it seems quite clear that these annual wages were inadequate to support a family in Minnesota for twelve months.

Since it was generally believed that beet-field workers could supplement their earnings with other farm work during the winter months, a study of these earnings was made for families on relief in Minnesota in 1936 and 1937. These average earnings were found to amount to but $48.41 per family in 1936 and $47.42 in 1937. These wages were secured from work in the onion fields, in peas, and corn, and in the southern portion of the state in picking potatoes.

The movement of beet-field workers into Minneapolis and St. Paul Mexican settlements called attention to the group. Since many of the families were transients, they were handled as any other non-resident. To these families this meant a threat of being returned to the place of their legal settlement or if they were aliens to Mexico.

### *Deportations*

Many families remembering the deportation of a group of their friends and neighbors to Mexico in 1934 preferred to undergo real hardship rather than ask for relief. The deportation of some 328 persons to Mexico in 1934 at the request of relief authorities has been severely criticized. It is not the purpose of this report to consider advisability of that plan. It is sufficient to say that the return of these families including children who were citizens by birth of the United States created confusion and misunderstanding in the Mexican communities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

### *Federal Aid*

The Federal Aid programs of the 1930's were not particularly beneficial to the Mexicans. Because many of the heads of households were aliens, opportunity to work on W. P. A. (Work Project Administration) was denied them. The omission of agricultural workers from the insurance provisions of the Social Security Act excluded the Mexican beet-field worker from this source of benefits also. The assistance provisions of this act including aid for the aged, blind persons, and dependent children did not offer much help to the Mexicans in Minnesota for very few families met the eligibility requirements of these programs.

### *Relief Status in Recent Years*

In 1947 the Governor's Interracial Commission made a survey of 33 counties in which Mexican persons either lived or worked. Of the counties studied in which Mexicans worked but did not settle permanently fourteen reported that though the population was a migrant one, no one had requested aid or service. Two counties had provided medical care for nonresident families.

Eight counties with a small resident population of Mexican persons had provided neither aid nor service to anyone in the Mexican group. The fact that the counties had in the past provided some aid to the group would tend to confirm the fact that few Mexicans apply for service aid when employment is available. The fact that this survey was made in August should be noted, for this month is recognized as one when work is plentiful and relief costs are low. In an effort to meet this criticism the reports of the counties just discussed covered the twelve month period of July 1, 1946 to July 1, 1947.

The reports of the other nine counties in which the Mexican persons lived and worked indicated that while no employable person was receiving assistance, aid was being granted to the aged, blind, dependent children and unemployables. In these instances of aid granted, whether it was to the six recipients of old age assistance in the state or to the one blind person receiving aid or the twenty-nine families receiving aid to dependent children, the standards of care and service were the same as those provided for other residents of the community.

The work in which the Mexican resident of Minnesota is now engaged is for the most part not seasonal and consequently the problem of supporting a family for twelve months on the earnings of three should not arise.

At the present time the migrant beet-field worker, with a very few exceptions, is not in need. While the majority of this group return to Texas each fall, a few families remain in Minnesota each year. For example, six families remained in the Hollandale area in the winter of 1950-51 and were given relief during the winter months when no work was available.

In 1952 the Commission sent questionnaires to all of Minnesota's 87 County Welfare Agencies asking them to estimate the total migrant or resident number of Mexicans within the county and to inform the Commission concerning the type of aids or relief which may have been given to any of them.

All except two of the agencies replied. Twenty-seven counties were found to have Mexicans either permanent or migrant within their borders. Big Stone, Faribault, Kandiyohi, Marshall, McLeod, Norman, Nicollet, Renville, and Steele counties indicated that they had fewer Mexican migrants than there were in 1947 when the previous survey was taken. Clay, Redwood, Sibley, Wabasha, and Wilkin counties reported an increase. Blue Earth, Benton, Dakota, LeSueur, Morrison, Pennington, Pipestone, and St. Louis had the same number of Mexicans as in 1947. The following figures were given concerning aid or relief in 1952:

### Clay County—

One permanent family with 12 children receives aid each winter. This is the same situation which existed in 1947.

### Blue Earth—

14 Mexicans were receiving aid in 1952 representing an increase over former years.

### Dakota County—

Dakota County with the same number of Mexicans as in 1947 was giving aid to two, the same number being assisted in 1947.

### Faribault County—

The Faribault Welfare Agency reported no knowledge of the total number of Mexicans to be found in the county but indicated that 29 Mexicans were receiving aid which represented a decrease from 1947.

### Hennepin County—

Hennepin County where the Mexican population has remained about the same as in 1947 had nine ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) cases in 1952, about the same as usual.

**Kandiyohi County—**

Three Mexicans were receiving aid in Kandiyohi County, the same number as in 1947.

**Marshall County—**

Five were getting aid in Marshall County, a decrease over the past several years.

**Martin County—**

In Martin County 20 Mexicans were being assisted, a decrease over the number receiving aid in 1947.

**Nicollet County—**

Nicollet County had one Mexican on relief, a decrease over 1947.

**Ramsey County—**

Ramsey County reported that 346 Mexicans received either aid, relief, or medical services from July 1, 1951 to July 1, 1952.

**Wadena County—**

Wadena County gave assistance to one Mexican migrant in 1952 and has no record of having helped Mexicans prior to that time.

**Waseca County—**

There are several permanent families living in Waseca County making a total of 30 persons. Medical care was being given to two Mexican families in 1952.

The following counties had been giving aid to Mexicans in 1947 and were not assisting any in 1952: McLeod, Norman, Renville, Sibley.

Since only two counties reported an increase in the number of Mexicans assisted in 1952, and eight counties reporting indicated a decrease, it appears that the welfare needs of Mexicans in the state as a whole have lessened to a considerable degree.

### *Young Population*

In considering the relatively few persons of Mexican ancestry who are receiving Old Age Assistance it should be noted that one of the principal characteristics of the population in Minnesota is its youth. Any person who meets the eligibility requirements of the program would receive this type of aid through the Social Security program.

## Chapter V

# EDUCATING THE MEXICAN

### The Schools

As in almost all fields where the Mexican community is concerned, some distinction must be made between the city school and rural school situations. When it comes to a comparison between native ability and achievement records of Mexican and non-Mexican children, there is often a language factor to consider.

Both urban and rural teachers polled agreed that for the most part Mexican children present negligible disciplinary problems at any age. They are described as polite, lighthearted, cooperative and amenable to helpful suggestion, especially those dealing with the habits of health and sanitation.

The seasonal nature of work engaged in by the Mexican parent employed in the beet fields and other agricultural areas militates against the orderly schooling of their children. The beet-working families usually arrive on location in April to be ready for the hand processes of blocking and thinning which is done in May. The harvesting process beginning in October requires the presence in the fields of all workers under contract for that purpose. Until 1950 many children of fourteen years of age or over remained in the fields instead of enrolling in school. The amended Fair Labor Standards Act of the federal government providing that no children under 16 could work as hired laborers during school hours went into effect in 1950. The enforcement of this law coupled with the state compulsory education law as well as the fact that mechanization makes it unnecessary for many workers to remain for the harvest, have eliminated the presence of school-age children in the beet fields of Minnesota with the exception of a few cases of violation of the law which are still found upon occasion.

In 1949 about 4,900 Texas Mexicans remained in the state for the beet topping and harvest. Mechanization now takes care of about 90 per cent of the harvest with the consequence that only 600 Mexicans stayed for harvesting beets in 1952.

### *Rural Areas*

In the rural areas generally, whether the migrants are concerned with the beet culture of field work in vegetables, or in work for the large canning companies, the district schools to which their children would normally go are not geared for attention to the special problems of migrant children. As a rule accommodations are just large enough for the regular resident attendance, and teachers are provided to take care of the normal class load of pupils only. The belated influx of uncertain number at irregular times can result in serious over-crowding as well as significant lowering of the average achieve-

ment levels as shown in state reports since the transient newcomer cannot be expected to make a very good showing. It thus means putting real hardships upon local educational facilities.

These practical problems are no doubt largely responsible for occasionally circulated reports that Mexican children are made to feel unwelcome in district schools, and that their condition often seems to be a matter of indifference to state and county authorities. Such reports seem to be disproved by the results of a poll among school authorities in counties where Mexicans either live as migratory workers, or in a few instances, make their permanent homes.

Enforcement of the Minnesota compulsory education law which requires children under 16 to be in school as well as the federal law which now makes the same provision has caused some trouble and resentment among school officials in rural communities which employ migrant labor.

### *Hollandale*

The community of Hollandale, Minnesota, a vegetable producing area dependent upon migrant labor for the cultivation and harvesting of crops, is an example of cooperative attitudes being substituted for ill-feeling and suspicion. At first the community was resistant to the idea of taking migrant children into its schools. After a period of turbulence when some growers and school authorities rebelled against the enforcement of the compulsory school laws, the community came to realize that if it were to continue to recruit migrant labor which was urgently needed, it would be necessary to assume responsibility for some of the educational needs of migrant children. Most of the rural schools were not large enough to handle the number of migrant children in the district (about 200) but one district which had a large space which had been used as an auditorium agreed to take all the children. This space was equipped with desks, books, and other supplies and an extra temporary teacher was employed to teach the migrant children.

The entire community came to the support of the program after a minister and a priest in the area urged the growers in their congregations to tell the migratory workers that their children should be in school.

During the winter of 1950-51 several families from Texas whose earnings had been low because of adverse weather conditions and poor crops stayed in Hollandale for the winter. The twenty-five children from these families continued in school. In the spring of 1951 one local grower who recruits workers for himself and other growers, prepared contracts in Spanish for the workers to sign. These contracts contained clauses explaining the Minnesota school attendance law and the Federal Minimum Age Provision. Copies of these contracts were left with the Texas State Employment Service offices. Families of Texas Mexicans were asked to bring birth certificates and school records of their school age children. Early in May 65 migrant-family children were enrolled in Hollandale elementary and high school with not less than 120 expected by the end of the school year.

For the facts about the Hollandale situation, the Commission is indebted to John P. Martin, Federal Representative of the Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Division of the U. S. Department of Labor who works with the Minnesota State Department of Labor, and to a publication received from the Federal Bureau of Labor.

Mr. Martin's report to the Commission revealed that an official of the community of Hollandale who recruits Mexican migrant labor had stated that only 3% of the labor supply of the area had left because of the enforcement of the 16 year minimum.

Of the 2,000 Mexican workers in Polk County in 1952, almost half remained in Texas until late in May in order that their children might complete school. There appears to be a growing awareness on the part of migrant Mexican parents as well as school authorities and growers, that educational needs of migrant children must be met.

In its former study of the Mexicans in Minnesota published in 1948, the Governor's Interracial Commission sent questionnaires to county superintendents of schools where Mexicans either worked or resided. In 1952 letters were addressed to the same superintendents asking for information concerning Mexicans in their schools in this year.

A report from Blue Earth County indicates that eight children of Mexican parentage are now enrolled in the Mankato schools and that five others were enrolled at the beginning of the school year but dropped out when they reached sixteen despite the best efforts of teachers to persuade them to remain. The teachers of Blue Earth County indicated that the Mexican students made average to good grades and only one had presented a disciplinary problem. In 1947 the number of Mexican children in Mankato schools had also been eight.

In the Rapidan district of Blue Earth County, three Mexican students were enrolled. In rural district number 3 there were two Mexican children in November 1952. Two older boys from the same family had left school at 16.

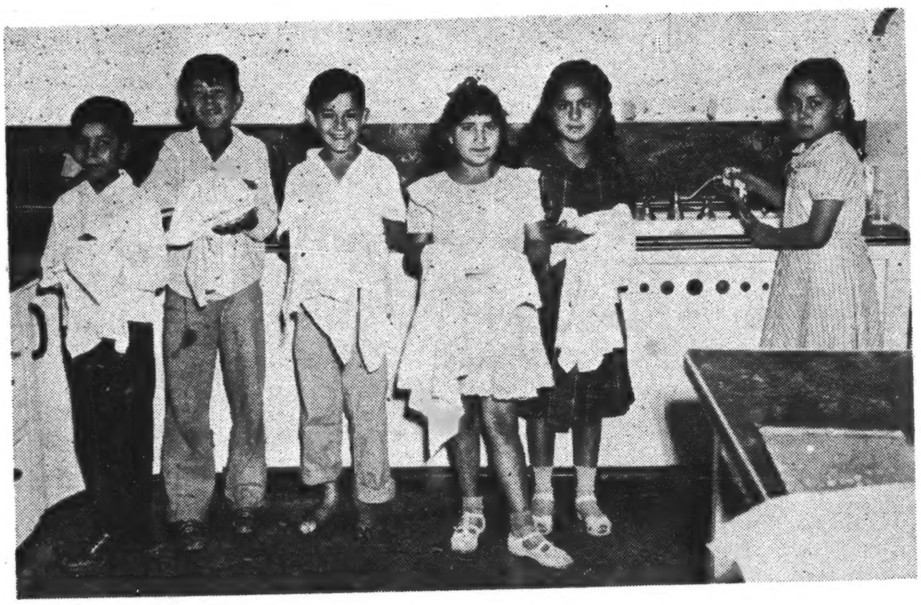
Dakota County reported that there were four children from related families in the Inver Grove School and that four children from the same families were attending Junior and Senior high schools in South St. Paul.

Marshall County which reported four Mexican children in attendance in 1947 had no Mexicans enrolled in 1952.

## *Summer Schools*

One of the most interesting educational projects carried on in the interest of the children of migrant agricultural workers is the one inaugurated in June 1944 by the Sisters of St. Benedict who staff the parochial school of St. Joseph's Catholic Church at Moorhead.

Following a survey of family conditions among the Mexican workers in the neighboring sugar-beet fields, the Sisters who were concerned about the inevitable neglect of the children who were too young to accompany their parents to work, set



up a six-week summer school course. They engaged a truck to make daily rounds among the Mexicans for the purpose of getting the children safely to and from the town. They discovered, however, through steadily dwindling attendance, that the fathers and mothers distrusted this means of transportation and refused to make use of it.

Abandoning the plan as infeasible, the Sisters decided that a summer boarding school offered the only solution. They converted four of their classrooms into dormitories. These were furnished with the aid of funds and furnishings donated by the townspeople and on June 18, 1944, the school was opened with an enrollment of 32 which soon increased to 73. Pupils were brought from their homes each Sunday evening and returned there on Friday afternoon or evening.

Classes, beginning with the kindergarten, continued through the fifth grade. Among the regular subjects taught special stress was laid upon Americanism and the learning of English. The children were also given plenty of opportunity for exercising their love of songs and dances that are so important a part of their tradition. Meanwhile, they were provided with nourishing food and were taught a regular hygiene routine beginning with bathing and tooth-brushing and including cleaning the premises. The Sister who reported the history of the school in detail, emphasized the zeal with which the children, both boys and girls, attended the summer school and adopted habits of cleanliness and punctuality.

The Sisters wisely provided facilities for gay, friendly gatherings, or fiestas, in which all members of the Mexican community were given a chance to participate when the occasional slackening of work in the fields permitted. A committee of older people cooperated with the Sisters in making arrangements and a Mexican violin-guitar orchestra played for dancing and for the singing that is so inevitably associated with these people.

The 1947 session of the school offered the added facility of a day nursery. The Sisters have declared their intention of carrying on the enterprise indefinitely. They repeat what other teachers have said about the natural good manners, responsiveness, and readiness to cooperate exhibited by Mexican children.

In a report to the Governor's Interracial Commission from the Reverend John T. O'Toole, Director of the Spanish Education Program for the diocese of Crookston, the Commission was informed that in the summer of 1952 during a six-week period there was an average attendance of 110 at the Moorhead boarding school. A priest, two seminarians, and ten nuns served as teachers.

At Crookston there was an average attendance of 100 with a priest, two seminarians and ten nuns on the teaching staff.

Food and all supplies were furnished the children. A nominal fee of one dollar per week per student was requested but only a third of the parents paid this sum.

The ages of the pupils ranged from 5 to 13. The Reverend O'Toole remarked that the school had a very noticeable effect on the majority of the students in regard to habits of cleanliness and in manners.

Classes were conducted in English with the exception of the religious classes where it was considered advisable to employ Spanish to assure understanding of the material. Attendance was voluntary and the students came because they were eager to attend. This resulted in good spirits and produced unusually good results, the Director indicated.

### *Summer Schools Sponsored by the Migrant Committee of the Minnesota Council of Churches and the Home Mission Council of North America*

Under the sponsorship of the Migrant Committee of the Minnesota Council of Churches and the Home Missions Board of North America, a summer school was conducted in the Cummings School at East Grand Forks in 1951. It was in session from July 9 to the 23rd, from nine until five, five days each week.

At Fairmont in 1951, 67 children from pre-schoolers to sixth graders attended the Mission School. In addition to religious study, instruction was given in spelling, arithmetic, language training, crafts, and recreation. The superintendent and principal of the public schools provided text books. The county librarian offered film strip and records and permitted the use of a projector and a phonograph for a low rental fee. The life guard at Sylvanous Park gave free swimming lessons which were much enjoyed by the Mexican children. Hot lunches were served, thanks to the help of local churches, bakeries, and ice cream companies who contributed food. A lumber concern donated scraps of wood for the crafts class and some material came from a local hobby shop.

In the summer of 1951, three schools for Mexican children were established in Faribault County, two in rural school buildings, and one at Bricelyn in the basement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In 1952 a vacation school for Texas Mexicans was held throughout the summer at the Salvation Army building in Fairmont. The county nurse and the local school nurse gave valuable assistance in health work. Local doctors donated time for immunization with serum which was furnished by the Minnesota Department of Health. Other medical help for children in the school was also given by the local doctors.

A report from the teachers who worked in the Fairmont summer school indicates that the migrants who come to Fairmont are more carefully selected than those in many places and the community cooperation is above average. In this area the parents of most of the Mexican children permitted their youngsters between the ages of 4 and 12 to attend the summer school. The teachers found most of the children to be about two years behind in their school work. The pupils expressed enthusiasm for this school saying they thought it was a good one because the teachers gave them so much attention and really liked them.

### *Minneapolis*

Numerous surveys of the city school situation as it affects Mexican children have been made in both St. Paul and Minneapolis with interesting, if not particularly decisive results. In the last overall survey taken by the Minneapolis Board of Education office in 1947, it was found that Minneapolis with an estimated population of 300 Mexicans had about 88 children of this community attending eight elementary schools (Washington, Grant, Adams, Blaine, Clay, Longfellow, Seward, and Harrison). Seventeen were enrolled in three Junior High Schools (Franklin, Lincoln and Phillips), while North and South Senior High Schools each had six Mexicans. Eighteen were attending St. Joseph's parochial school and three, that of the Church of the Holy Rosary.

At the request of the Interracial Commission, some principals in Minneapolis made surveys of their buildings in the autumn of 1952. The heaviest concentration of Mexican students was found in the Blaine School which had 43. The total number in all the grade schools listed in the first paragraph above had not risen beyond 100. The number in the junior high schools had not increased in total. Franklin had 12, North

High 11, and South High 4. St. Joseph's parochial school had 22 and the Church of the Holy Rosary reported that there were two in its school.

Intelligence tests given through the Board of Education office to 104 Mexican pupils showed the following results in terms of IQ ratings.

| Rating | Number of Pupils |
|---|---|
| Under 60 | 1 |
| 60-69 | 9 |
| 70-79 | 16 |
| 80-89 | 27 |
| 90-99 | 26 |
| 100-109 | 18 |
| 110-119 | 6 |
| Over 120 | 1 |

Thus the median rating shown was 88, the average 89.2, the lowest 52, and the highest 124. This is compared with the accepted average among white American school children as 100, and points between 80 and 90 as indicating what is technically known as the dull-normal mental status. This test is considered representative of similar communities, the consensus of authorities being that, age for age, and grade for grade, Mexican pupils are inferior to white Americans in verbal tests although in non-language tests the results show virtual equality. Various educators point to this condition as perhaps indicating unfairness in the application of the standard Binet tests to Mexican children, not only because of their unfamiliarity with English, but because the system is at least partly based upon concepts new to a Mexican child's experience.

Teachers in both St. Paul and Minneapolis schools describe their Mexican charges as psychologically like their colleagues of other origins in that they greatly want to be accepted, recognized and made to feel a sense of security.

## *Saint Paul*

Classes in English and citizenship are conducted throughout the school year by 15 teachers paid by the city of St. Paul. A class meets twice weekly at the Neighborhood House in

St. Paul's West Side. A large proportion of those who attend even though most of them were born in the United States, are illiterate in both Spanish and English. Both English and citizenship classes are held at the International Institute; they are offered in afternoon and evening meetings two days during each week.

In 1946 the International Institute together with the Neighborhood House made a survey covering adult and juvenile education of the Mexicans in St. Paul. In 1952 a representative from the Commission checked with the public and parochial schools which had been featured in the 1946 report. In 1946 the Lafayette School on the West Side had 200 enrolled from the Mexican community. In 1952 there were 175. The second largest enrollment was at the Lincoln School with 43 where there had been a slight increase. St. Mary's parochial school had 55 in 1946, and 34 in 1952. While St. Louis's had 14 children of Mexican parentage in 1946, it reported none enrolled in 1952. There were 30 Mexican students at the Assumption School in 1946 and 25 in 1952.

The enrollment of Mexican students at Roosevelt Junior High School rose from 40 in 1946 to 64 in 1952. Mechanic Arts Senior High climbed from 20 to 80, Humboldt from 10 to 12.

St. Joseph's Academy, a Catholic high school for girls reported 4 students from the Mexican community in 1946. There were 3 in 1952. A teacher reported that the office secretary at the school was a graduate of St. Joseph's and was of Mexican parentage. She spoke highly of the young woman's intelligence and ability.

Cretin, a Catholic high school for boys listed one student from the Mexican community in 1946 and one in 1952. A scholarship won at Mechanic Arts High School enabled a Mexican girl to enter the College of St. Catherine to study for a career in social work. She graduated and is now employed in a St. Paul agency. A young man from Humboldt merited a scholarship which sent him to the University of Minnesota.

Ten years ago it was rare to find a Mexican child persisting through the ninth grade as their parents seldom insisted that they do so. Five years ago 75 were enrolled in St. Paul junior and senior high schools. In 1952 there were 160 enrolled. A Mexican American is attending Macalester College. Three have graduated from Twin City colleges and found employment. One is a social worker, another a probation officer, and the third a recreation director.

While only one Mexican veteran is attending college under the G. I. Bill of Rights, a considerable number have used it for vocational training, especially in radio, engineering and the mechanical trades generally.

Absences from school on the part of the group are reportedly due to the same general conditions that affect the non-Mexican families of corresponding economic status: illness, public health regulations, and the claims of employment opportunity. In the case of the Minneapolis survey, an effort was made to discover what, if any, special interests had been developed by individual children, but these did not appear to have been formulated by the lower-grade majority, and among the high school students there was an enforced preoccupation with the necessity of finding a means of support, to the exclusion of personal inclination.

As was to be expected, it was judged that children in the St. Paul Community who showed marked evidence of retardation in school as some do, had been subjected to the same hampering influences that affected the Minneapolis record—largely one of language difficulty. One or two teachers called attention to the additional fact that the parents of children in the community are virtually always incapable of helping with home work assigned by the teachers.

In general their instructors credit these pupils with noticeably good manners, amenability to discipline, and a willing and cooperative spirit. In cases where such characterization does not apply, the difficulty is usually traceable to a low level of home morale.

## Religious Groups

But more important in training in arithmetic or other cultural skills is the development of practices of worship of the eternal Creator and training in the habits of conformity to the moral law. Patently, character education and preparation for citizenship must stem from religious convictions. The cultivation of these precious values in the Mexican have not been neglected in Minnesota.

A large majority of Mexicans profess the Catholic faith of their ancestors. Since St. Paul is the home of more than three-fifths of the state's total Mexican population, it is natural that it should also be the site of a national church for the colony, the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, at 186 East Fairfield Avenue.

Primarily, the church is concerned with its spiritual duties toward parishioners, but extensive welfare and recreational programs are also provided. Close cooperation with the Catholic Youth Center has made possible such desirable features as summer camp stays for the children and the church itself offers hospitality to a large number of clubs and other groups organized for a variety of purposes. During the depression years of the 'thirties, the church also carried on a large and substantial relief program among the many Mexican victims of the situation. The money to finance many of these activities was raised by the Guild of Catholic Women.

In the spring of 1952, during the flood, the St. Vincent De Paul Society appealed for donations of clothing and furniture from the citizens of St. Paul. The response was generous. About $1,500 was contributed as well as food and clothing. Distributions were made to the needy regardless of color or creed.

A cultural project, unique in the Middle West, was initiated by the Club Montparnasse of St. Paul with the cooperation of the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. A room in the church has been freshly decorated and used for a Mexican museum. It contains oil paintings and water colors of Mexican scenes contributed by a St. Paul artist. Pottery, weaving, glass, figurines, and jewelry have been given to the museum by members of the parish and other interested persons.

### *The Credit Union*

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Credit Union was started by the Reverend James Ward after he made a study of parish credit unions functioning in Canada. The Reverend James Ward asked one of the young men of Mexican parentage in the Parish who had training in accounting to help organize the project. Notices and letters were sent out to parishioners explaining the purpose of credit unions and asking interested persons to come to a meeting. The first meeting was held in February 1948. Individuals contributed $38.00. Of this amount $25.00 was paid for the charter. The bookkeeping books which cost $80.00 were bought on credit. The first loan of $50.00 was made in July. By the end of 1948, the organization had $2,500.00 in assets. In the fall of 1952 the assets had climbed to $16,000.00.

Personal loans from $25.00 to $800.00 have been given to help during sickness, for the purchase of automobiles, clothing, and fuel. A borrower may receive $50.00 on his signature or $100.00 if he has shares in the credit union. There must be from one to three co-signers. People getting loans must save at least 50 cents per week and make a repayment on a loan of at least $1.25.

The Credit Union has 140 shareholders, about forty of whom are borrowers. Accounts vary from five to almost one thousand dollars. After disasters like the floods of 1951 and 1952 and a fire, people who had been keeping money in a jar because they distrusted banks, brought their savings to the credit union.

As a result of making loans on a character basis, the association has a record of 100 per cent collection.

The treasurer of the Credit Union is the only person paid for his services. There is a board of directors consisting of five men, a credit committee of three, and a supervisory committee which goes over the books. This is the only credit union of its type operating in this section of the nation. The treasurer says that when he attends National Credit Association Conventions he is often thought to be from a foreign country.

Up until three years ago the First Baptist Church of St. Paul on Wacouta Street employed an assistant pastor who spoke Spanish to work with the Mexican members of the congregation. His services are no longer considered necessary as almost all of the Mexicans of the parish now speak English. A member of the congregation offered his services for home visits to families who may still find some difficulty in understanding English. There are 15 families of Mexican descent attending this church regularly. They join in all the activities of the congregation.

Work among the non-Catholic Mexicans in both agricultural and urban districts has been carried on for several years by the Minnesota Migrant Service, an agency of the Minnesota Council of Religious Education working with the Home Missions Council of North America. Beginning in 1940, in the Red River Valley sugar-beet area, the representatives of the service concerned themselves with both religious and educational projects among the Mexicans, and also have stressed assistance to the migrants in obtaining improved living conditions and in breaking down discriminatory barriers set up in some local communities.

Since 1944 this agency has extended its services to a few of the canning centers. Here, among the beet-workers, the program has included instruction in English, Health, and first aid as well as religion. By 1946 the committee had staff members working at East Grand Forks, Crookston, Moorhead, Ortonville, Fairmont, Winnebago, Blue Earth and Hollandale.

In 1952 a Family Center was maintained at Fisher in Polk County. A recreation center was opened in a vacant store building. From seven to ten, five days per week, on certain days during or following rainfall when work could not be done in the fields, and on Saturdays and Sundays from May 30 to July 25th, this center provided recreational facilities for Mexican families.

## Social Agencies

A number of social agencies in Minnesota also are making contributions to the state's educational aims for the Mexicans. Among the established agencies concerned with the welfare of the Mexican colony, the pioneer is the Neighborhood House of St. Paul. The Neighborhood House director began, in 1920, to recognize the Mexican's special needs when the St. Paul settlement was small compared with the 3,800 it has at present.

As described by the director, the Neighborhood House program works toward four main objectives. First, the general social adjustment of the new-comers to their new environment is considered. This plan involves full recognition of the children's cultural needs. Encouragement and practical assistance in obtaining American citizenship is the second consideration. The third aim is concerned with finding employment for those who need it. Fourth, a general welfare program, entailing close cooperation with the health and public welfare authorities as well as probation and parole officers, is offered.

The Neighborhood House aids social adjustment of the Mexicans by a broad program of activities carried on through groups and clubs. The Neighborhood House recognizes the special skills of this artistic group and encourages them to organize orchestras, give concerts, and develop handicraft projects. The agency also helps them work out programs for their patriotic and religious holidays and festivals. The main objective of the Neighborhood House is to integrate the Mexican into the group life of the community as a whole rather than segregating him in groups peopled entirely by Mexicans. Although Mexicans were not particularly interested in athletics when they first settled in St. Paul, many of them have become fine athletes through the Neighborhood House activities in this field. Classes in English have been organized to help those aspiring for citizenship and to provide instruction designed to inform the Mexicans of their civic obligations.

Mexican housewives who work to supplement the family income may leave their pre-school children at the Neighborhood House Nursery school for a modest fee.

In the field of employment service, the Neighborhood House has found numerous outlets for Mexican labor other than agricultural. The Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, the Seeger Refrigerator Company and the Street Railway Company have employed Mexican labor. In former years the American Crystal Sugar Company has used the Neighborhood House for aid in recruiting labor for the beet fields.

Another St. Paul agency which has long shown a practical interest in the integration of the Mexicans with the population as a whole is the International Institute. The Institute has afforded the Mexicans an increasingly wide opportunity through festivals and exhibits to display their many native skills to advantage and to contribute to community life through their special talent for the more personally expressive arts. Like the Neighborhood House, the International Institute also offers classes in English and prepares the Mexican for citizenship. Legal aid in establishing claims is provided.

The St. Paul Council of Human Relations aids the Mexican as it does other minority groups, in investigating reports of racial discrimination. This organization wages a continuous campaign against intolerance.

For a number of years the Traveler's Aid working in the St. Paul and Minneapolis railway and bus terminals has been helpful to Mexicans coming into and leaving the state. The services of an interpreter are secured for bewildered travelers unfamiliar with the English language. Sleeping quarters are obtained and money for food is given to Mexicans needing it. Sometimes the Traveler's Aid brings the Mexican in contact with other social agencies which may be of help if he has a particular problem. The director of the Traveler's Aid in Minneapolis reported that a considerable number of Mexicans were given quarters by her organization when the seasonal employment ended in Minnesota in 1948. During the past two years no Mexican has asked for service from the Minneapolis Traveler's Aid. Five persons of Mexican heritage asked for assistance from the St. Paul agency in 1952.

The Family Service Association of St. Paul gave the Governor's Interracial Commission a report of its contact with persons from the Mexican community for a period from October 1951 to October 1952. In October 1951 two Mexicans asked for information. Three cases were accepted for help. One asked for assistance in making a personal budget, another wanted aid in a debt adjustment, and the third was seeking counsel concerning a divorce.

In November there were three cases, one involving a landlord-tenant dispute, another a personality problem, and the third a marital problem.

In December one came for pre-marital advice and one for marital counseling.

In January there was one case of financial need, one concerning divorce, and one which had to do with the supervision of children in the home.

In February there was one commitment to an institution because of mental deficiency, and one request for marital counseling.

In March one person asked for help in paying a debt. There was one personality problem, one desertion, and one request for financial aid.

In April help was asked for a child behavior problem and there was one request for aid in settling a landlord-tenant dispute.

In June there was one request for financial aid.

In July one case involved debt adjustment, one finances, and one marital counseling.

In August one case concerned family relationships, one child behavior, one the collecting of money owed a client, and a fourth dealt with debt adjustment.

In September there was one debt-adjustment case, one involving marital counseling, and one was a marital case which was referred to Legal Aid for help in getting a divorce.

Along with these monthly cases, the Director of Family Service had record of five Mexican families who were cared for in Juvenile Court, and four children who were neglected and dependent as well as one delinquent who was sent to Juvenile Court. Three families were brought in, in order that the Family agency might discuss plans for placement of their children.

The Director of the Catholic Charities reports that 34 Mexican children received service from her agency in a similar period to the one reviewed by Family Service. With the exception of two, these children were placed either in the orphanage or in boarding homes. One was placed under the supervision of the Juvenile Court and one girl was supervised prior to pre-natal care.

Family counseling was given to 15 Mexican families. Of these eight had twelve months of service. Four had two months and one had seven months of service. Two families were given eight months of service. The cases involved marital counseling and debt adjustment.

The status of Minnesota's Mexican colony was as a whole bettered with the establishment of a Mexican consulate in St. Paul in the Spring of 1947. Prior to that time all official dealings between the Mexican government had to be conducted through the consulate in Chicago. Much delay in effecting negotiations resulted because of distance and the overload schedule in Chicago. The consulate in St. Paul was to be short-lived, however. Perhaps the fact that very few Mexican nationals came to Minnesota from 1948 to 1950 brought about the closing of the consulate here.

## Chapter VI

# THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE MEXICAN

All Mexicans who were born in any part of the United States, by birth acquire citizenship in the United States and the state of their birth. Their rights and privileges are identical with those of citizens whose ancestors came from Europe. Consequently Mexicans who were born in Minnesota are citizens of Minnesota and of the United States. Mexicans born in other states may become voters in Minnesota after living here the required number of months.

Some of the Mexicans now residing in Minnesota were born in Mexico and migrated here usually after some years of residence in the Southwest. A considerable percentage of that group apparently entered the country illegally, often by crossing the Rio Grande. A great many of these people often termed "wet backs" are still coming into the United States illegally as is testified by the fact that 66 of them were deported from Minnesota in 1952. Because the illegal entrant fears deportation, he is often non-communicative with workers and government officials who try to help him. In some instances there is no basis for the fear of deportation since their illegal entrance has been corrected by statute. It seems then that in this report some exposition of the civil law which regulates Mexican immigrants should be given. And since civil law is highly technical and complex, the Commission asked a lawyer to submit a digest of the laws pertinent to the Mexican. It is summarized in the following pages.

## The Mexican at the Border

### *Mexico a Non-Quota Country*

The Mexican need not await the assignment of a quota number for entrance to the United States because Mexico is a non-quota country. The McCarran Act does not apply to the Mexican immigrant since he comes from a non-quota country. He applies for a visa through the United States consular office in the district in which he lives. With his application he submits a medical certificate, a police certificate indicating a police record or lack of one, certified copies of birth records, and, if married, copies of the civil marriage record. If all his documents are in order and no other obstacle arises, the Mexican will secure a visa. But a visa does not guarantee entry since admission depends upon his physical condition at the time of arrival at the United States port of entry.

## *What Immigrants Would Be Excluded?*

Exclusion laws meet the Mexican at or before the time of arrival. Mental defectives, epileptics, chronic alcoholics and paupers will not be admitted. Tubercular aliens or others with dangerous contagious disease, criminals, polygamists, contract laborers, persons who are likely to become public charges are denied entrance. Acceptance is denied to illiterates who cannot read the English language or some other language or dialect. However, a Mexican who has crossed the border and is a resident here may send for his father, grandfather, wife, mother, grandmother, unmarried or widowed daughter even though such relatives cannot read, if they are otherwise admissible. The United States will not accept Mexicans who advocate the violent overthrow of the government.

If the Immigration and Naturalization Service suspect any Mexican of belonging to any of the foregoing groups, the Mexican alien is detained at the port of entry and if he has gained entrance he is returned immediately. But if a Mexican, either a naturalized citizen or a permanent resident, sends for his wife or minor children, and they have a contagious disorder, easily curable, they may still be admitted if the expenses of the cure are paid, and the disease is not dangerous to others.

Any Mexican who, after March 4, 1929, obtained entry to the United States by a false or misleading statement as to any of the foregoing material facts may be imprisoned and deported.

# The Immigrant Within the United States

## *Immigrants Who May Be Deported*

After the Mexican enters the United States he remains subject to the control of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and may be deported if undesirable. He is entitled to a fair hearing before an official examiner of the Immigration Service. Because these hearings are administrative proceedings, they are not subject to the usual rules surrounding judicial hearings, nor is the alien entitled to the constitutional safeguards in criminal trials.

The evidence at such hearings must prove that the Mexican is undesirable. The immigration laws lay down rules to guide the examiner in determining who are to be classified as undesirable. The list includes Mexican immigrants who have been found within five years after entry to be members of excludable classes at the time of entry. Mexicans violating the entry laws or other laws of the United States or advocating or teaching the violent overthrow of the government are subject to deportation. The nation will not deport Mexicans who become public charges within five years after entry from causes arising after entry into the United States.

The United States rates as undesirable, Mexicans convicted of crimes involving moral turpitude committed within five years after entry or those convicted of or admitting the commission of a felony or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude prior to entry. Also listed as subject to deportation are Mexicans assisting other Mexicans to enter the United States illegally, and prostitutes.

If the Mexican subject for deportation is not an immoral person, narcotic peddler, mental or physical defective, anarchist, or subversive, the Attorney General of the United States may upon proof of good moral character of the Mexican for the preceding five years, permit him to leave the country voluntarily for a country of his own choice but at his own expense.

### *Who May Be Saved From Deportation?*

Although he may have entered the United States illegally, a Mexican in very limited instances is given an opportunity to remain despite previous irregularity. If he is subject to exclusion because he may become a public charge or because of physical disability other than tuberculosis or a dangerous contagious disease, he may be permitted to remain by giving a cash or other suitable bond in an amount determined by the Attorney General to protect the United States or any state against the Mexican becoming a public charge.

A Mexican considered among the excludable classes at the time of entry, with the exception of narcotic peddlers or subversives, may not be deported if the Immigration Service does not bring deportation proceedings within five years after entry.

Mexicans who are arrested and convicted of a crime committed more than five years after entry are not deported even though the crime involves moral turpitude.

A Mexican cannot be deported because he has entered the United States at some point other than a port of entry unless deportation proceedings are begun within three years, but the ground of coming in without a visa could still be used against him.

If he entered the United States before July 1, 1924, the Mexican is not in danger of deportation if he has good moral character. He may legalize his entry by making application to the Immigration and Naturalization Service and paying a fee of $18.00.

If entry was after July 1, 1924, the Mexican would be subject to deportation unless he had married a citizen or legally resident alien in the meantime. Then if serious economic detriment would result from the deportation to the spouse or minor children, the Attorney General may suspend the deportation and permit permanent residence if Congress, after a report of the matter, does not affirmatively demand deportation.

However, if the Mexican entered before or after July 1, 1924 and advocated or taught the violent overthrow of the government, he would be subject to deportation. He could not exercise the privilege of legalizing his entry.

## Rights and Privileges of the Immigrant

The Mexican immigrant who is properly admitted to the United States acquires certain rights and duties. He must obey the laws of the United States, except such as pertain solely to citizens. In turn, he is entitled to the protection of the laws relating to his person and property. He is protected by the Fourteenth Amendment of our Constitution and cannot be deprived of his life, liberty or property without due process of law. He could sue and be sued in the courts.

Minnesota, together with some other states, limits the right of aliens to own land. The Minnesota statute provides that no person, unless he is a citizen of the United States or has declared his intention of becoming one, shall acquire land or any interest therein, exceeding 90,000 square feet, except such as is acquired by will or inheritance. This restriction does not apply to actual settlers on farms of not more than 160 acres; nor does it apply to subjects or citizens of a foreign country whose rights to hold lands are secured by treaty. Lands held contrary to such restrictions are subject to forfeiture to the state.

Eligible persons receive the benefit of welfare services given by the State of Minnesota. Financial aid given to the poor, blind, dependent children, and other services are granted to needy aliens that possess the residential requirements. Old age assistance is also available if an alien has resided continuously in the United States for more than 25 years and five out of the last nine in Minnesota provided of course that he or she meets the other eligibility requirements.

## Acquiring Citizenship

At any time after admission for permanent residence the alien may take the first steps toward naturalization by filing with the Clerk of the United States Court a declaration of intention of becoming a citizen. This is popularly called getting "first papers."

After the expiration of two years and five years of residence but not more than seven years, the alien must file a petition for naturalization or "second papers." This petition is followed by a preliminary hearing before the Immigration Service which makes findings and recommendations to the United States District Court that the petition be granted, denied, or continued. If the recommendation is that the petition be granted, the final hearing is in an open court and results in a certificate of naturalization.

In a survey made by the International Institute of St. Paul in 1946, it was learned that out of a total of 378 residents born in Mexico, 283 were still non-citizens. Eleven received first papers in 1946. The Educational Director of the Institute said that during the period beginning in September 1946 and ending in June 1947, 12 Mexicans were naturalized after attending classes at the Institute. From September 1947 to June 1948, only five had been granted second papers but she attributed the decline in numbers to the fact that fewer court hearings had been held during that period. From 1950 to 1952 nine Mexicans received naturalization papers. Only three are studying at the Institute to prepare themselves for citizenship at the present time. The director points out that the requirements for citizenship have become more stringent during the past three years. Time was when the new citizen need not have mastered more than enough written English to be able to write his name. He is now required to be able to read and write English to a degree which will enable him to convey his thoughts in English to others.

Perhaps the large number of non-citizens in the St. Paul colony may be explained by reviewing certain factors. Mexicans in the United States, unable to prove legal entry, have been afraid to come forward and make application for citizenship. It is known that thousands of Mexicans waded the Rio Grande or slipped across the border in Arizona and New Mexico between 1925 and 1926 when the United States was badly in need of a greater labor force.

In 1940 all aliens were required to register. Then, for the first time, many Mexicans learned of the provision previously mentioned in this chapter, namely that a Mexican who had come to the United States before July 1, 1924, even if illegally, could evade deportation. If a Mexican after 1924 entered the country illegally and if he has a spouse who is a legally resident alien, he could, after a warrant of deportation had been issued against him, make application to Congress for its suspension, pleading that deportation would mean hardship for his children. Then if congress does not object following the payment of the visa and head tax fee his status might be legalized and application for citizenship be made in the regular way.

## Chapter VII

# THE MEXICAN AND HIS FUTURE IN MINNESOTA

### *The Process of Assimilation*

The success with which a new populational element achieves integration in a previously settled society is measured by the effectiveness of the two-way process which such a merger inexorably demands. Plan and effort must exist on both sides, as well as the knowledge of underlying differences and similarities. Generally speaking, the burden of proof of failure rests upon the majority group, since it commands the greater strength and resource.

When we consider that about 4,800 Mexicans living in Minnesota make but a fraction of our total population of 3,018,163 (1950 census figure) absorption would seem fairly simple, numerically at least. It is pertinent to remember too, that most Mexicans are a blend of Spanish and Indian ancestry representing two ancient and highly developed cultures recognized by scholars as having rich contributions to make to our own.

In many instances the important heritage of the immigrant Mexican is offset, and often nullified, by the conditions of life he sought to escape in coming to the United States. A caste system set up by Spanish conquerors of Latin-America centuries ago has made the growth of democracy as we know it almost impossible. The system limits opportunities for the development of whole sections of the Mexican population.

The language barrier prevents rapid integration of the Mexican into Minnesota social and civic life. Even the considerable percentage of the Minnesota community composed of persons born in the United States and possessed of American citizenship before coming here, cannot speak English fluently. The Mexicans have lived for the most parts in districts where only Spanish is spoken. To some extent residential restrictions limit the Mexican to his own group but these are not so often imposed by the community as sought by the Mexican himself. It is habituary for new-comers to settle in an already established Mexican district for protection, understanding and companionship.

Facts and figures indicate, however, that the movement toward integration of the Mexican into Minnesota life, while it may be slow, is a steady one. The Director of the Neighborhood House in St. Paul pointed out to the interviewer from the Commission that the younger generation of Mexicans who have had most of their education in Minnesota schools are beginning to exhibit marked civic consciousness and interest in embarking upon community projects. It is significant too, to note the educational record. Less than ten years ago it was remarkable to find a Mexican child remaining in school after he had reached the ninth grade. After that he was considered by his people to have had enough of book learning and to be ready to contribute toward the economic support of his household, or to prepare himself for a trade.

Today 160 Mexican boys and girls from St. Paul are attending high school and six have gone to college. This indicates that parents are becoming interested in having their children seek higher education and that difficulties of language and other bars to adjustment in school, difficulties very real to newcomers are growing less. On the basis of this record it seems fair to predict that an increasing number of Mexicans will seek greater opportunities.

There is no doubt that Mexicans have much of value to offer their new home in the field of talent in the arts. Students of music note how richly it has flourished in lands where Spanish blood has been fused with that of other races. In the Philippines, the Caribbean, and the South and Central American countries universally practiced folk-song and folk-dance have given opportunity and encouragement. From these roots phases of high advancement and sophistication have grown. Produced from these same sources are strikingly gifted practitioners of the graphic arts and highly developed handicrafts. Given an opportunity for expression in a sympathetic environment, all these assets can become valuable to American culture.

Whether or not the population at large in America can be a beneficiary of the important contributions which Mexicans have to offer depends largely on the extent to which white Americans meet the problems of racial discrimination.

Many Minnesota Mexicans are of pure, or nearly pure, Indian descent, and are very dark in color. Those with proportionately greater percentage of Spanish heritage are usually readily recognizable, a fact which sometimes makes it easy for the unthinking to indulge in labels of distinction. Any type of discriminatory practice always results in an artificial slowing-up of a normal assimilative process.

### *Alleged Discriminations*

In spite of the fact of color and other discernible physical characteristics, the Mexican does not seem to encounter within Minnesota, extensive discrimination based upon skin color. Definitely they are free from many discriminatory practices which they encounter in the Southwestern part of the United States.

Possibly they may be beneficiaries both of the spirit of brotherhood which usually accompanies a war and also of the extensive interracial programs conducted across the state during the past ten years.

Data collected for this report does not provide evidence that Mexican children have been denied entrance to public schools in Minnesota. In the rural schools there have been some acts which might arouse suspicion of discrimination but there the objection to Mexicans is not on the basis of race or color, but rather because of irregular attendance.

Facts given earlier in this study would indicate that a variety of employment was offered the Mexican within the Twin Cities. From the FEPC Commission in Minneapolis comes the report of one instance of alleged discrimination concerning a Mexican girl who came here from Texas and sought employment in the local store of a national concern who had given her work as a clerk in Texas. Despite the fact that this firm advertised daily for help she was told that no clerks were needed when she applied. The principal of one of the St. Paul high schools says that he feels that the Mexican graduates have difficulty in getting office work even when well qualified. On the whole, however, the employment situation for the Mexican appears to be healthy and improving.

Since the Mexicans were the last group to come to Minnesota, they acquired the poorest houses. Because they spoke another tongue, they congregated for social purposes. Some as their economic condition improved, have moved into better residential districts and encountered little opposition. There have been a few instances of discrimination. In West St. Paul a petition of protest began to circulate when a fine young Mexican family tried to move into a house on the hill. The Director of the Neighborhood House visited the white families on the hill and explained that the Mexican family who wished to enter their block was intelligent, neat, and dependable and that the children were exceptionally well behaved. The petition was withdrawn.

From two counties in the rural area have come reports of discrimination in housing. Upon at least two occasions a Mexican had made housing arrangements and when he went to make final settlement was told that the house was not available to him.

In the rural areas there have been some cases reported where Mexicans have been refused service in restaurants. They encounter signs reading, "No Mexicans may eat here." The basis of opposition seems to be a point of hygiene.

In the cities the Commission has received no report of Mexicans being denied service. Possibly, as the Mexican acquires greater familiarity with English and consequently greater mobility, he may meet discrimination.

## *Minnesota's Need of the Mexican*

No one racial or national group have a monopoly on all culture and knowledge and art. The people of Minnesota are not an exception. From the Mexican they have much to learn. The larger the number of Mexicans assimilated into the population of the state, the higher may be the status of culture and the arts. Culturally the Mexican may add to our assets.

Economically, Minnesota needs the Mexican. For many decades now intermittent efforts have been made to bring them here to work in the beet fields and the canneries. The growth of these industries in the past five years has been great. At the present time canning ranks as the twelfth largest industry in the state and shows every sign of moving higher in the scale. In 1952 the canning industry in Minnesota provided employment for 16,000 people most of whom worked on a seasonal basis. There are not enough people within the state to do all this seasonal work. Reliable migrants are needed by the canners.

Demographically Minnesota may need the Mexican. Although Minnesota's birth rate rose from 67,303 in 1947 to 80,047 in 1951 overcoming the downward trend which was seen from 1940 to 1945, the fact remains that for many years the agricultural labor supply during the peak seasons is likely to be short. An increase by migration of industrious people would be an asset to Minnesota. The Mexicans are in that category and what is more they are a youthful, vigorous group.

## *A Summary*

Since the Commission made its first report on the Mexicans in Minnesota in 1948, changes have occurred. Fewer Mexicans are attracted to Minnesota as agricultural workers because mechanization of the harvesting of beets has shortened the working season. Decreased earnings for beet workers during a season have also resulted because the average number of workers in the Mexican families has fallen from five to four.

More and varied work has become available to the Mexicans living in the Twin Cities. The number of Mexicans employed in the skilled trades, public services, and the professions is rising. A larger number of Mexican housewives are employed outside the home.

While many Mexican children still drop out of school after becoming sixteen, there has been an encouraging rise in the number who graduate from high school and attend college.

Health conditions among the Mexicans are improving although the number of active cases of tuberculosis is larger than that of the general population.

Mexicans are becoming more self reliant and less dependent upon welfare agencies. The delinquency rate among both adults and children in the Mexican group is very low. Few are arrested or sent to penal institutions.

Discrimination in housing and employment still exists in scattered instances but it is not general.

Although some of the housing for Mexicans in both rural and urban districts is still far from adequate, progress is being made. Over 50 per cent of the Mexicans living in the Twin Cities now own their homes and are repairing old dwellings. Many Mexicans have been denied a place in the public housing units because they have not yet become citizens of the United States.

Facts gathered in the present report indicate that the Mexican in Minnesota provides well for his family when given year round employment, is a reliable workman, and assumes civic responsibilities.

Because the Commission feels that the Mexicans are making a worthwhile contribution to the state and should be encouraged to come here and make their home, a program for attracting and retaining them has been formulated.

## *A Program for Attracting and Retaining Mexicans*

There is already on the statute books some legislation which might be invoked to protect the Mexican if racial discrimination against him should increase. Since 1885 Minnesota has had an equal rights law which prohibits discrimination in hotels, restaurants and other public places. The recent decision of the United States Supreme Court will give some protection against restrictive covenants. If the Legislature deems it wise to enact a state Fair Employment Statute the Mexican will be a beneficiary of that law.

But in addition to the existing law the Commission is of the opinion that the following objectives should be recognized and accepted both by the people and officials of various political units within the state.

### *Education—*

All schools throughout the state should place greater emphasis upon the values of Latin-American Citizenship and develop programs to orient Mexican students into school life. The State Department of Education should assume the initiative in examining the possibility of developing summer schools for migrant children who have been deprived of a full term of school during the year. Such schools might be located in areas where other agencies have not provided summer school facilities for migrant children whose parents are employed in the beet fields or canneries. Where there are teacher's training schools Mexican children could be taken into the training classes. Mobile units could be tried in some areas. They have been used successfully in some states as an answer to the problem of educating migrant children.

### *Employment—*

The Chamber of Commerce and other industrial groups, possibly with the assistance of the proper state officials, should give thought to the development of seasonal industries so that Mexicans who work in the beet fields would have employment during the winter months. Since three companies employ a large share of the migrant workers coming into Minnesota, these companies could make long range plans for them thus ensuring themselves labor supply when most needed.

### *Informational Agencies—*

Private organizations such as women's clubs and service organizations could plan informational programs treating of the state's need and use of the Mexican. Newspapers could help by publishing more feature stories stressing the Mexican's admirable family life, the responsibility he is beginning to assume in civic affairs, his attempts to solve his own financial problems, his musical and artistic attributes.

### *Social and Recreational Programs—*

Social organizations and business groups in communities where there are many migrants could band together to maintain social and recreation centers for Mexicans as well as nursery schools for the children whose mothers are working in the beet fields or canneries. The churches have made a good start in this direction but cannot be expected to carry the responsibility alone in all areas of the state where migrants come.

### *Legislation—*

The present statutory provisions covering residence, settlement, and the giving of assistance to needy workers should be amended to the end that such workers that are brought into the state to perform specific tasks required by our agricultural economy should receive the same treatment and care as the other state residents. The memory of the deportation of the thirties is still a bitter memory in the Mexican community.

The Health Code set up for migrant housing is an advance in the right direction but more could be achieved if the legislature would strengthen the law by providing the State Health Department with some enforcement powers as well as the right to inspect.

## *Minnesota and the Americas*

In recent years some of our statesmen have given much thought to the methods by which the Latin American countries and the United States might be welded into greater unity. Repeatedly good will ambassadors have been sent to Latin American countries. In these days while the spectre of Communism spreads over the world the need for hemisphere unity is even greater.

It may be that citizens of the United States have neglected the most potent ambassadors. They are the Latin Americans who now dwell here. For some write constantly to their relatives and friends at home. Those letters go into towns and villages in Mexico. They are passed around and talked about. The Latin Americans in those towns form their opinion of the United States from the information and opinions conveyed in those letters.

The Mexicans who come to Minnesota even for only a season are part of a cultural chain stretching down to Texas across the Rio Grande and deep into Mexico. In their letters and their visits they record the treatment that they experience in Minnesota. For good or evil they are ambassadors for Minnesota.

In the beet fields, in the canning factories, in city industrial plants, in the residential areas, in the stores and restaurants, Minnesotans have many contacts with Mexicans. They may seem to be small and personal. But a strong hawser is wound from many small strings. A strong policy of hemisphere unity and defense could likewise be woven from such small strings of personal contact. When a Minnesotan treats a Mexican with kindliness and fairness he may be making a contribution to a better world order.

That program the Governor's Interracial Commission respectfully recommends to the citizens of Minnesota.